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WORKS

OF

LEONARD WOODS. D. D.,

LATELY PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER.

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CONTENTS.

LECTURE LXXXVII.

Page.

REGENERATION. DIRECT AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT, . 1—10

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

REGENERATION. DIRECT AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT CONSISTENT WITH MORAL AGENCY, ... 11—25

Physical influence and change, ... 14
Why should ministers preach? 18
Duty of sinners to become holy, ... 21

LECTURE LXXXIX.

DIRECTIONS TO INQUIRING SINNERS, ... 26—43

LECTURE XC.

EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION, ... 44—55

LECTURE XCI.

NATURE OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE, ... 56—67

LECTURE XCII.

REPENTANCE, ... 68—78

LECTURE XCIII.

Faith, in the general sense, ... 79—92
Faith in Christ, ... 85

LECTURE XCIV.

Faith — can it be described? . . . . . 93—104
Practical influence, ... 98

LECTURE XCV.

Prayer — its nature, design, and efficacy, . . 105—113

LECTURE XCVI.

Efficacy of prayer subject to limitations, . . 114—120

LECTURE XCVII.

Prayer of faith, ... 121—129

LECTURE XCVIII.

Prayer of faith continued, ... 130—141

LECTURE XCIX.

Definite views of the influence of prayer, . . 142—155
Practical remarks as to the duty, ... 149

LECTURE C.

Justification explained, ... 156—170

LECTURE CI.

Justification — its nature and ground, . . 171—191

LECTURE CII.

JUSTIFYING FAITH. ITS NATURE, ... 192—207
Are justification and sanctification identical? 196
Final justification of the believer, ... 198
Propriety of praying for forgiveness, ... 200
Imputation of Christ's righteousness, ... 201

LECTURE CIII.

PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED, ... 208—219
The orthodox doctrine promotive of obedience, ... 213

LECTURE CIV.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS, ... 220—230

LECTURE CV.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE, 231—249

LECTURE CVI.

RESURRECTION, ... 250—266

LECTURE CVII.

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT DEFENDED AGAINST THE OBJECTIONS OF FOSTER, ... 267—291

LECTURE CVIII.

REVIEW OF FOSTER CONTINUED, ... 292—307

LECTURE CIX.

CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES. BAPTISM, ... 308—316

LECTURE CX.

INFANT BAPTISM, ... 317—326
Precautions and directions, ... 317
Kind of evidence, ... 320
Want of express command, ... 322

LECTURE CXI.

INFANT BAPTISM, ... 327—337
A previous rite applied to infant children, ... 327
The same rite for parents and children, ... 333

LECTURE CXII.

INFANT BAPTISM, ... 338—350
Christianity founded on the Old Testament, ... 338
New Testament implies infant baptism, ... 342
Baptism of proselytes, ... 346

LECTURE CXIII.

INFANT BAPTISM, ... 351—368
Commission of the apostles to proselyte all nations, . . . 351
Instructions of Christ favorable to infant baptism, . . . 355

LECTURE CXIV.

INFANT BAPTISM, ... 369—383
Household baptism, ... 370
1 Cor. 7: 14, considered, ... 372

LECTURE CXV.

INFANT BAPTISM. COLLATERAL EVIDENCE, . . . 384—393

LECTURE CXVI.

INFANT BAPTISM. PROOF FROM HISTORY, . . . 394—414

LECTURE CXVII.

BAPTISM AND CIRCUMCISION, ... 415—443
Import of infant baptism, ... 429
Utility, ... 432
Relation of baptized children to the church, ... 437
Duty of parents and the church, ... 440

LECTURE CXVIII.

FORM OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM, ... 444—465

LECTURE CXIX.

THE LORD'S SUPPER, ... 466—474

LECTURE CXX.

THE LORD'S DAY, OR CHRISTIAN SABBATH, . . 475—487

LECTURE CXXI.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY, ... 488—501
The claim of bishops, from Matt. 18: 18, ... 494
Christ's promise to be with his apostles considered, . . . 496

LECTURE CXXII.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY, ... 502—520
Nothing favorable to prelacy in the Acts of the Apostles, . . 502
Nothing in the epistles, ... 505

LECTURE CXXIII.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY, ... 521—535
Testimony of the ancient fathers, ... 523
Testimony of Chrysostom and Jerome, ... 524
Reason for establishing prelacy, ... 529
Introduction of prelacy, ... 533

LECTURE CXXIV.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY, ... 536—552

Apostolic succession, ... 536
Remarks of Whately, ... 539
Usher, ... 540
Gospel ministry a divine appointment, ... 541
Illustration from civil government, ... 542
Prelacy of hurtful tendency, ... 549

LECTURE CXXV.

LITURGY, ... 553—571

Imposes unscriptural restrictions on the clergy, . . . 553
Baptismal service, ... 559
Liturgy retains superstitious additions from the Romish church, 567

LECTURE CXXVI.

POPULAR FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT, . . . 572—583

Congregationalism and Presbyterianism compared, . . . 572
Principles of Congregationalism, ... 574
Things necessary for Congregationalists, ... 577

LECTURE CXXVII.

PERSONAL RELIGION NECESSARY TO MINISTERS, . . 584—590

Duties of ministers, ... 585
Trials and difficulties of ministers, ... 588

LECTURE CXXVIII.

PERSONAL RELIGION CONTINUED, ... 591—596

Necessary to a minister's usefulness, ... 591
Necessary to his enjoyment, ... 594

LECTURE LXXXVII.

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT IN REGENERATION ACT DIRECTLY ON THE SINNER'S MIND?

Our next inquiry will be, *whether the Spirit of God in regeneration acts directly on the mind itself, or on something which is extraneous to the mind, and which is employed as a means of producing the effect.*

In a general view, what can be more congruous to the nature of the subject, than the doctrine, that the eternal, all-powerful Spirit has a direct access to the minds which he created and sustains, and that he influences and governs them as he pleases? It is clear that *we* have access to the minds of men only through the medium of signs and bodily organs. Such is the design of our Creator. The sphere of action and the degree and manner of influence assigned to us, correspond with our nature and relations. But the influence which God exercises over the minds of men is, in all respects, infinitely superior to ours. To suppose that his power is subject to such conditions and limitations as those which regulate the power belonging to us, would be to lose sight of his perfections, and to make him like ourselves. The God of the universe must be free from all the hinderances and restrictions which appertain to the exercise of the power imparted to us, and must be perfectly able to turn and guide, to regulate and purify every mind, and all minds, according to his pleasure. This is involved in the very idea of his Godhead and his complete dominion over created beings. It is involved in many passages of Scripture, in which he is expressly declared to have exercised

such supreme power. If any one thinks that God cannot exert this unlimited control over the minds of men, I ask, what hinders? Is not infinite power sufficient to control finite power? Has not the Creator and Upholder of all things power over those who live and move and have their being in him? If he has not this power, how can he maintain his dominion, and do all his pleasure?

But I shall not stop with this general view. There are particular considerations which bear upon the subject, and which I shall now lay before you.

The *first* consideration which occurs to me is this; *that as the effect produced in regeneration is in the mind itself, so must the influence be which produces it.* The disorder to be remedied lies in *the heart;* and where but to the heart is the remedy to be applied? As to the truths of religion, there is nothing which needs to be altered in any of them. All that we are required to believe is true; all that we are required to love is excellent and amiable; and all that we are required to do is reasonable and just. There is no fault in any of these objects. There is nothing faulty anywhere, except in the mind itself. The whole evil to be remedied lies there. And the change to be effected must be effected there. Man's disposition — the state of his affections — is opposed to spiritual things. His heart is depraved. The divine Spirit must act upon the heart itself; must so alter man's moral state that, when holy objects are presented to view, holy affections will spontaneously arise; must take away moral obliquity, and give uprightness. The sum of my remarks under this head is, that as man's moral nature or heart is the subject of the evil to be removed and the renewal to be experienced, it must be the subject of that divine influence which removes the evil and produces the renewal.

Secondly: *no one can conceive it to be otherwise.* You may employ such a phraseology as will invest the subject with an ambiguous generality, and will thus hold your minds in an indefinite, obscure contemplation of it, and make it difficult to know what to believe and what to disbelieve. But if you bring the subject near, and take a distinct view of it, you will find it incon-

ceivable that the Spirit of God in renewing the sinner, should act upon anything but *the mind itself*. Upon what else can he act? Do you say he acts upon *the truths of religion*, so as to render them effectual; that he imparts power to motives, so that they excite and persuade the sinner to repent and believe? Let us examine this notion. The divine Spirit, you say, acts upon the truths of religion. But what are the truths of religion, but propositions, written, spoken, or contemplated, respecting God and man, and other moral objects? These propositions, which are contained in the Scriptures, are immutable. Nothing can be added to them, or taken from them. They are just what they should be. The Spirit has fully revealed these truths, and in this respect his work is perfectly accomplished.

But you say that the Spirit of God imparts *clearness* and *power* to divine truth, so that it may be rightly apprehended, and may produce its proper effect: as in natural things, an object may be taken from a misty, obscure atmosphere, and placed in a clear light. I agree that there is an obscurity, which prevents the truth from being rightly apprehended by the sinner. But where does the obscurity lie? In the truth itself, or in the mind of the sinner? And in order to remove this obscurity, is it necessary that any alteration should be made *in the truth?* When we say that the Spirit of God imparts clearness to divine truth, we speak of an operation and an effect produced *in the mind itself*, the truth remaining perfectly the same. To give clearness to revealed truth, is to give clearness to the minds of those who contemplate it; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "to open the eyes of their understanding." Every object is in the dark even at noon-day, to one who is blind. There is light enough, and surrounding objects are, in themselves, sufficiently illuminated. But if you would make them clear to the man who is blind, you must open his eyes. The illumination needed respects his organ of sight. No change is required in external objects. The Christian is often heard to say, "In my unconverted state, the character of God and Christ, and the great truths of the gospel, were all dark to me. But when the Spirit of God visited my heart, all became

light." To give clearness to the truth, is to enlighten the mind to behold it.

And what is it to give *power* and *efficacy* to the truth? Is divine truth in reality weak and inefficient? If so, how does it come to have such power over those who are sanctified? Does sanctification make an alteration in the truth itself, or in the mind which contemplates it? Take the truth, that God so loved the world as to give his Son to die for us. How great is its power over believers! It moves all their faculties. It controls their hearts and their lives. But to the proud and unbelieving, the same truth is powerless. Whence the difference? The text, John 3: 16, is before the eyes of the believer and the unbeliever. They both read it, and read it alike. But the effect is different, and that effect is *in the mind*. The precise difference is this: the believer discerns the excellence of the truth, and loves it, but the unbeliever does not. The believer contemplates the compassion and grace of God in the gift of his Son, with pious wonder and gratitude, and with a hearty resolution to live no longer to himself, but to him who died for him. The unbeliever hears the proclamation of mercy, but hears not; he sees the light of the gospel, but sees not. He is alive to the world, but dead to spiritual things. The *power* of divine truth over the believer is precisely this, he *feels powerfully* towards it — or has a *strong affection* for it — *loves* it *intensely*. And the Spirit of God gives power to the truth by causing the mind to discern it clearly, to believe it firmly, and to exercise powerful affections in view of it. He makes the truth efficacious by bringing the heart effectually to love and obey it. To suppose that the Spirit in the work of sanctification acts upon anything extraneous to the mind, would be utterly inconsistent with the nature of the subject.

Do you say, that the influence of the Spirit affects not the mind itself, but its *actions* — beginning and ending with them? But here again we must take care not to be imposed upon by mere sounds. Actions imply an *agent*. They cannot exist by themselves, away from the agent. To influence the *actions* of the mind, is to influence *the mind in acting*. To cause *right* actions is to cause the mind to *act right*.

Finally, the current language of Scripture implies, that the divine Spirit operates upon the mind or heart itself. "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you." God enlightens the heart, renews and purifies the heart, sheds abroad his love in the heart. And where it is said that God influences the actions of believers, it is still said that the influence is upon and in the agents. He works *in them*, and right willing and acting is the effect. And when Christians pray intelligently for the influence of the Spirit, they have, I think, no other conception, than that the Spirit is to act upon the mind or heart itself, and to produce the desired effect there. They are sensible that the divine influence is needed there, and there only; and that if their hearts may be made pure, all things will be pure to them.

But there is another class of texts which must be considered, namely, those which speak of God as renewing and sanctifying his people *by the truth*. "Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth." Believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." And the Apostle says to the Corinthians, "I have begotten you through the gospel." And the Psalmist says, the word of God enlightens and converts men.

In these and other like texts, the inspired writers, it is said, plainly teach that, in the work of conversion and sanctification, the divine Spirit acts on the mind, not directly, but *indirectly*, that is, *through the medium of the truth*.

In reference to these texts, and their bearing on the present subject, I would suggest the following things:

In the first place, it will be found, that those writers and preachers, who hold most decidedly to the direct and efficacious influence of the Spirit upon the mind, entertain as high an opinion, as any others, of the importance and necessity of divine truth in the work of sanctifying sinners, and are as active in teaching and defending

it. In all this they find no practical difficulty; nor are they aware of any inconsistency. Edwards argued, I think very conclusively, that the influence of motives, is perfectly consistent with the efficacious influence of the Spirit in renewing the heart; — in other words, that the doctrine of God's direct and effectual agency on the heart in sanctification, and the doctrine that he makes use of *means* in sanctification, are entirely consistent with each other. There is no more inconsistency here, than in any case where God in his providence employs means in the accomplishment of his designs.

Any one who carefully considers the subject must be satisfied, that the use which God makes of means in the different departments of his administration, does not detract in the least from the reality or the greatness of the power which he exercises. Surely he does not resort to the use of means because of any deficiency in the measure of power which he possesses, or because he is weary of exercising it. God's appointing means arises from the perfection of his wisdom, not from his desire to avoid the necessity of exerting his omnipotence. This remark applies particularly to the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. The use which God makes of divine truth, whether in the commencement or in the progress of sanctification, does not supersede the agency of the Holy Spirit, nor interfere with its direct bearing upon the heart. That agency may evidently be as real, and as great, and may come to man's moral nature as directly, as though no means were employed. God may choose to sanctify his people by means of the truth, not because this method of sanctification requires a less powerful and direct agency of his Spirit, but because it is more suitable to the nature of rational beings, and more agreeable to his wisdom, — and because it is more adapted to make his agency manifest to his creatures. If the use of the truth as a means of sanctification supersedes the necessity of a direct and efficacious operation of the Spirit upon the heart, it must be because the truth has, in itself, an efficacy to reach the heart and accomplish its renovation, independently of divine agency. But nothing is made more certain by experience and the word of God, than the utter inefficacy of

truth to originate holiness in the minds of the unrenewed, or to continue it in the minds of Christians, *without the operation of the Holy Spirit.*

Do you ask, why divine truth is used at all as a means of regenerating and sanctifying the heart, if it has in itself no power to accomplish the work? I reply, that there are evidently very important reasons for the use which is made of the truth, though in itself, independently of the influence of the Spirit, it is utterly *powerless.* Some of these reasons have been already suggested. Man is a rational and moral being, and it seems plainly to follow from his very nature, that the exercise of holiness from its commencement, must take place in view of some portion of divine truth. How can it be conceived that the Holy Spirit, be his agency ever so direct and powerful, can originate holy exercises, when no holy object is presented to the mind? How can love, or faith, or desire be excited, while a person sees nothing to love, nothing to believe, and nothing to desire? The presence and influence of suitable objects is implied in the very nature of holy affection. So that if holy affection is ever actually to exist, it must exist in view of proper objects; in other words, it must take place, while some portion of divine truth is contemplated. To suppose that any one loves, without having before his mind an object of love, would be palpably absurd. But you will see in a moment, that divine truth, however clearly presented to the mind of a man while unregenerate, must fail of exciting any right affection. Divine truth is holy. The objects it presents, for example, the character of God, his law, and his gospel, are all holy. The heart of the unrenewed is unholy. And who does not know what takes place, when those holy objects are pressed upon the attention of an ungodly man, and when he is required to love with all his heart a God, whose character is totally opposed to his disposition; to receive a Saviour who has no beauty in his view; and to render a willing obedience to a law which stands against those interests to which he is supremely attached? And how is this settled aversion of his heart to holy objects to be displaced, and cordial love to be elicited, but by the renewing of the Holy Spirit? Three things are here quite

obvious. First, God's effectual agency. He gives a new heart. He regenerates. Second, the use of means. Divine truth is placed before the mind. Holy objects are looked at. In other words, motives to holy affections are exhibited. Third, the rectified agency of the regenerated person. He loves. He believes. He obeys. He puts forth right affections and forms right purposes in view of divine truth. Divine truth has this influence upon him. And it has this influence upon him, he loves, believes, and obeys in view of divine truth, because the Spirit of God has renewed his heart. A renewed and holy heart loves what is holy, believes what is true, and does what God commands. Divine truth must then be held to be a means of sanctification as developed in holy exercises, because this instrumentality of the truth is involved in the very nature of holy exercises. God's people cannot be actually sanctified, that is, holy affection cannot be produced and strengthened in them, in any other way than through the truth. The new heart, which is given in regeneration, cannot be developed and become a matter of observation or of consciousness, except *through the truth.*

But there is another reason why the truth is made the means of sanctification, though it has *in itself* no power to sanctify. The reason is, that this mode of sanctifying makes it manifest, that the work is God's — that the power which sanctifies is the power of his Spirit. Thus it is represented, that God chose the apostles, the first preachers of the gospel, who were but earthen vessels, as instruments of turning men from darkness to light. And we are expressly informed why he did this, namely; "that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man." The more weak and inefficient, in themselves, the instruments or means which were employed, the more evident it was, that the effect was to be ascribed to God. Accordingly the Apostle teaches the utter inefficacy, the nothingness, of him who planteth and of him who watereth — that is, of those who in different ways labor to propagate divine truth and to save souls, and declares that all the success comes from God. And let it be remembered that *this* is one of the truths employed as a means of sanctification. Thus

divine truth and those who make it known, are manifestly *fit* means — means well adapted to accomplish the great object intended, that is, to glorify God by fixing all eyes and all hearts upon him as the supreme source of spiritual blessings. If any means should be used to promote the salvation of men, which would be, or appear to be, in themselves, adequate to produce the effect, and which would thus, more or less, set aside the necessity of divine agency; that would certainly be a very *unfit* means. For nothing can be more important, than that God should be brought into view, and his glory illustrated in the salvation of sinners. Any mode of proceeding, therefore, which would tend to obscure his glory, would be altogether unsuitable. Keeping this principle in view, we shall perceive the striking fitness of divine truth as a means of converting sinners, while their conversion is still considered as resulting from the work of God's Spirit on their hearts. It is not only true that the two things are compatible, but that the one clearly involves the other. If God should carry on the work of renewing and sanctifying men without the light and influence of divine truth, (supposing this to be possible) would not his agency be concealed? Would not his work be done in the dark, and the glory of his grace be obscured in the view of his redeemed kingdom?

We are then brought to this result, that when the inspired writers speak of the word of God, or divine truth, as having an effectual influence to turn men from sin and make them holy, they speak of it, not as it is *in itself*, independently of divine agency, but *as accompanied and made effectual by the operation of the Holy Spirit.* Unless we understand the sacred writers in this way, we make them inconsistent with themselves. For they sometimes represent the work as accomplished by the agency of God, without any mention of divine truth; and sometimes they represent that God does it by or through the truth, and sometimes that the word of God or the gospel does it. Just principles of interpretation require us to unite these representations. God himself converts and sanctifies men. He does the work. But he does it in his own way, that is, in connection with the truth, or by means

of his word — making just such a use of divine truth as will show us most clearly how sinful and helpless we are in ourselves, and how entirely dependent we are on the grace of God for the renewal of our hearts, and for the whole of sanctification.

The principle above laid down, may be illustrated by those supernatural works, which are commonly called *miracles*. The analogy, though not exact, is sufficient to show that God does employ means, in themselves ineffectual, for the purpose of making his own almighty agency manifest. There was no power in the rod of Moses, in itself considered, or in the act of Moses in stretching out the rod, to accomplish the marvellous things which took place in Egypt. Why did God make use of an instrument or means, so destitute of all inherent efficacy, except for the purpose of making his own agency conspicuous? Again. In the vision of the dry bones, there was no power in the four winds which the prophet invoked, or in the prophet who invoked them, to cause the dry bones to live. And it is evident that God appointed such feeble means to be used, so that it might be seen and acknowledged by all, that he himself accomplished the work. And why, except to make his own divine power visible, did Christ apply common clay to the eyes of the blind man, in restoring his sight? And to go to the Old Testament history again, why did God require Gideon's army to be reduced to a very small number, except for the purpose of preventing them from boasting of their own power, and making it manifest, that the victory was to be ascribed to God himself?

These and other examples of supernatural works are sufficient to satisfy us, that God may, for very important purposes, use divine truth as a means of converting and sanctifying men, though it has no inherent efficacy to accomplish the work.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

DIRECT AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT CONSISTENT WITH MORAL AGENCY. QUESTION ABOUT A PHYSICAL INFLUENCE AND PHYSICAL CHANGE. WHY SHOULD MINISTERS PREACH? DUTY OF SINNERS TO BECOME HOLY. EXERCISES OF THE AWAKENED.

Is a direct agency of God upon the mind itself, effectually removing its sinfulness and making it spiritual and holy, *consistent with free moral agency?*

In replying to this inquiry, I shall take it for granted, that a dependent being may be a free moral agent. If any one denies this, he ought to show why he denies it. He ought to show what there is in moral agency, which is incompatible with a state of dependence, or what there is in a state of dependence which is incompatible with moral agency. Till this is done, (and it cannot be done without denying the existence of accountable beings,) I shall deem it proper to consider it as a settled principle, that a dependent being may be a free moral agent. And then I ask, who can set limits to his dependence? If complete dependence takes away moral agency, any degree of dependence must diminish it; and men cannot be entirely free and moral, unless they are entirely independent. But such independence cannot be ascribed to created beings by any man in his right mind.

The fact is, that there is not a single attribute or circumstance of moral agency which implies any such thing as freedom from dependence on God. Reason is an essential attribute of a moral agent. But a man is none the less rational, because God *makes*

him rational, or because he exercises his reason under the divine control, or under the influence of causes appointed by divine wisdom. Again. Voluntariness is an attribute of a free moral agent. And surely a man is none the less voluntary, because God *makes* him voluntary; and none the less free from compulsion, because God orders it so that he shall be free. Nor has man any less sense of his obligation to do what is right and avoid what is wrong, because God has implanted such a sense within him. You cannot mention any attribute or circumstance of a moral agent, which is at all inconsistent with his being constantly and wholly dependent on God. Indeed, it is God, and God only, that, by his constant agency, *makes* us free, moral and accountable. It is *in him we have our being, as moral agents.*

But although there is not the least reason to suppose that free moral agency is incompatible with a state of dependence on God, and although it is strange that such a supposition should be made, after moral agents have existed and acted thousands of years in a state of dependence, without having experienced any inconvenience or embarrassment from it; yet the supposition is made; and the minds of many are involved in perplexity on the subject, both by the ambiguity of terms and the sophistry of arguments. I shall therefore offer a few remarks for the purpose of clearing the subject of obscurity, and placing it in a satisfactory light. My remarks will relate particularly to the subject before us — *the regenerating influence of the Spirit.*

1. It is most unreasonable to think, that he who created the soul, and who constantly preserves it in being, cannot exert whatever influence he pleases upon it, in perfect consistency with its moral nature. God has designed us to be moral, accountable beings; and we are sure he will never do any thing to interfere with his design. Accordingly, when we read in Scripture the strongest representations of God's influence upon man, such as his creating him anew, working in him to will and to do, etc., we are to consider it as certain, that all this influence is exercised in perfect harmony with our spiritual nature, and does not, in the least, supersede our free and accountable agency. Let the divine

influence rise ever so high, and produce effects ever so astonishing, we may always rest assured that it operates in such a manner as not to violate the nature which God has given us. This the sacred writers took for granted, and accordingly never made any attempt either to prove or to explain it.

2. That the regenerating influence of the Spirit does not in the least disturb the exercise of man's moral agency, appears from *the nature of the effects produced.* Our moral agency has been disturbed by sin. The divine Spirit removes that disturbance. Does this *interfere* with moral agency? The Spirit of God comes to one who is a slave, and makes him free. Does this *interfere* with his *freedom?* Does it interrupt a man's liberty, to break the chains which bind him, to open the prison doors and help him to escape? Does it interfere with a man's power of choice, to influence him to choose what is right? The Spirit takes a diseased moral agent, and makes him healthy — one who is weak, and makes him strong — one who is dead in sin, and makes him alive. Now does not one who is alive and healthy and strong, put forth as much agency, and as good an agency, as one who is diseased and weak and dead?

It appears then perfectly manifest from the nature of the effects produced in regeneration, that the efficacious influence of the Spirit acting directly upon the heart and changing it from stone to flesh, from impurity to purity, from enmity to love, neither supersedes nor interrupts man's free moral agency.

It has been already intimated, that the power we possess over our fellow men is very restricted. We cannot send into their hearts a regenerating, purifying influence. Without the presence and operation of the divine Spirit, neither men nor angels could turn one sinner from darkness to light. Nor could we, without that Spirit, enlighten and sanctify our own hearts. This we have learned from experience, as well as from the word of God. And who does not acknowledge this in his prayers? What Christian does not desire the Holy Spirit to dwell in him, and to exert a sanctifying influence upon him? Who that has been taught of God, will not say, let the Spirit come directly to my heart, and

work there mightily to subdue the power of sin, and to adorn me with the beauties of holiness? And yet it would appear from the speculations of some men, professing to be Christians, that they would choose not to be subject to any high degree of the Spirit's influence, lest it should somehow injure their free agency. Away with all speculations which contradict the most just and holy desires of the regenerate soul!

I shall here advert again to the inquiry, so often raised at the present day, whether God puts forth a *physical* influence in regeneration, and whether the change produced is a *physical* change. This inquiry, as I before remarked, cannot be intelligently answered, without determining the exact sense in which the word *physical* is used.

The word sometimes relates to *natural* or *material* things, in distinction from *moral* or *spiritual*. Thus the science of *physics* is the science of natural philosophy, the science of the material world, in distinction from the moral world. Accordingly, a physical power is a power which belongs to natural or material things, as the general power of attraction, the electric power, etc. A physical substance is matter; and a physical change is a change which takes place in a material substance. This is the original meaning of the word; and something of this meaning is apt to mingle itself with other uses of the word where the sense is intended to be different. Now if the word is taken in this sense, the question is easily answered. The influence of the Spirit in regeneration can no more be called a physical influence, than it can be called an electrical or a chemical influence. And the change which takes place, is not produced in a *material* substance, and has nothing of a physical or material nature.

The word is sometimes applied in a secondary sense, to the *mind*, and has a meaning allied to the one abovementioned, denoting whatever does not belong to moral objects. Thus we say, man has faculties of mind and inclinations, for example, understanding, memory, love of knowledge, and love of offspring, which are not strictly of a moral nature; and these are called natural faculties and affections, and sometimes, though less frequently and less properly,

physical, in contradistinction to conscience, which is called the *moral* faculty, and to the sense of right and wrong, called the *moral sense*, and love to God and man, which is strictly an affection of a *moral nature*. In reference to this use of the word, we say, the change in regeneration is not *physical*, as it does not primarily take place in the understanding, or memory, or in what are called the natural affections.

In opposition to the Pelagian heresy, the word physical came to be used to denote an influence beyond the influence of moral considerations, or of moral suasion, or as we commonly say, beyond the influence of truth, or the influence of rational motives, presented to the mind of a sinner. Pelagians held, that moral considerations are, of themselves, sufficient to influence the sinner to obey the gospel. The orthodox have always held, that the Spirit of God must cause a change in man's disposition or moral nature, *before* divine truth can be rightly received, and produce right affections. This change they sometimes called a *physical* change, and the influence which produces it, a *physical* influence, to distinguish it from the moral suasion of Pelagians. Now if the word *physical* is used to signify that change in man's moral *nature*, *temper*, *disposition*, or *heart*, which is pre-requisite to any right influence of motives; then the change must be called physical, and the influence which produces it must be called a physical influence, in contradistinction to the mere influence of motives presented to the view of an unregenerate man. This is the sense in which Owen and other older divines used the word. They evidently meant to signify that, in regeneration, a divine influence is exerted beyond the influence of truth, or moral suasion, and that a change is effected in the state of the mind preparatory to right exercises. As this was evidently their meaning, we ought by no means to represent them as holding to a *physical* influence of the Spirit and a *physical* regeneration, in the sense which the word now conveys. But the influence of the Spirit in regeneration may properly enough be called a *moral* influence, though not in the sense of ancient or modern Pelagians. It is the influence of a Being possessed of moral perfections, exerted upon a depraved moral agent,

and producing a change in his moral disposition, and consequently in his moral actions. As however, the mere influence of moral considerations has commonly been called moral influence, or moral suasion, we cannot use the phrase in a higher sense without being liable to be misunderstood. We shall therefore be more likely to avoid mistake, and to express exactly what we intend, if we speak of the regenerating influence of the Spirit, as a *special* or *supernatural* influence, and of the effect produced, as a moral or spiritual change, a change in the temper or spirit of the mind, or, more simply, a change of heart.

It is the fashion of some late writers to give to the word moral a very narrow sense, representing it as denoting nothing but *responsible actions*, actions or exercises for which a man is consciously praise-worthy, or blame-worthy, and for which he is to give account to the Supreme Judge. But the same writers do not hesitate to go beyond that narrow sense, and to ascribe to man moral *faculties*, a moral *existence*, and moral *relations*, for which surely he is not responsible. The fact is, that convenience requires the word to be used with considerable latitude; and any one who attempts to restrict it exactly to one single meaning, will involve himself in needless difficulties.

Owen, Edwards, Dwight, and Calvinists in general, say, that the Holy Spirit produces a change of heart antecedent to right exercises — that he gives to the soul a new *disposition* or *taste*, a *principle* of love and obedience. There are some who would stigmatize this opinion, by charging its advocates with holding to a *physical* regeneration, thus substituting a contemptuous epithet very improperly applied, in place of a valid argument. But I have before suggested, that those who thus decry what they call a *physical* change, do themselves really hold to it. For they say that there is in the mind of fallen man, previously to all conscious exercise, a tendency or disposition to sin, which is not sinful, and which is not of a moral nature, but merely *physical*. But they hold that the regenerating influence of the Spirit does remove this prevailing tendency to sin, and impart the opposite, that is, a tendency to holiness, though this tendency, or disposition, previous

to voluntary action, is not, they say, of a moral nature, and of course, is merely *physical*. Thus it is obviously and emphatically true, that in regard to this point, *they* are the men who hold to a physical regeneration. Against this imputation I feel myself and those with whom I agree, to be sufficiently guarded, as we consider both the propensity to sin in the depraved heart, and the propensity to holiness in the renewed, to be strictly a *moral* propensity, and to be the essential element of a character morally good or bad.

One thing more in regard to the particular subject under consideration. If any assert, as some do, that God can influence a free moral agent in no other way than by rational considerations addressed to the mind, I ask, how he knows this? How does he come to be assured, that God, who made the soul, cannot work in it such a disposition or state, that it shall love holy objects as soon as they are perceived? — that God cannot *pre-dispose* the heart to receive the truth — that he cannot give a right disposition in regard to the truth, *before* the truth is received? How does any one know, that God cannot so form the soul at first, or so renew it soon after it begins to exist, that it shall certainly put forth right affections as soon as it apprehends any objects of affection? And if an adult person, who has been an active opposer of religion, closes his eyes in sleep at night with a heart full of enmity to God, and if the moment he awakes he is conscious of a new affection — if his first thought is of God and his first emotion is love to God and delight in his perfections; would he not have reason to thank God for the change which had been wrought in his heart during his sleep, or at the moment of awaking, resulting in new affections, and in a new life? If God should be pleased to send forth a renovating influence into the heart of any one even in this manner, who would have any reason to question the reality of the change, because it was thus effected?

An important question may here be considered in relation to the duty of gospel ministers. It is a question which is apt to arise in the minds of those who have not a sufficiently strong confidence in God, and whose want of success exposes them to discouragement:

— If our faithfully presenting the great truths of Christianity to the minds of sinners, and laboring to persuade them to repent, cannot ensure success; then why should we be engaged in this work? If those who plant and those who water are nothing, and the increase is all of God; then why should we plant and water? Why not stand still, and refer the whole work of saving sinners to God?

I answer, first; the single fact of God's requiring us to teach the truths of revelation to our fellow-men, and to endeavor to persuade them to repent, is sufficient to satisfy us, that this is our proper work, and to excite us diligently to perform it. The Prophet Ezekiel was commanded to speak God's word to the people, whether they would hear or not, and he readily complied. Nor did he desist from the work appointed to him, because the people were hard-hearted and rebellious. And he promptly obeyed the divine direction, to call upon the dry bones to live, though he was aware that his word must, in itself, be totally inefficacious. And how readily did Moses, in obedience to God, call again and again upon the King of Egypt to let the Israelites go out, although he was expressly told beforehand, that Pharaoh would refuse to comply. The command of God is itself, in all cases, a sufficient reason for our obedience, however useless it may appear to our limited faculties. If then we could not conceive how our teaching the truths of the gospel would be of any use; it would still be wrong for us to neglect the work, or to go about it with a reluctant, divided mind.

But, secondly, although our labor in preaching the gospel, taken by itself, separately from the blessing of God, would be of no avail; yet, when attended with the promised influence of the Holy Spirit, it has a wonderful energy. The truth is thus clothed with power. And those who preach it, though consciously weak, and insufficient for the work assigned to them, derive strength and sufficiency from above. If the divine Spirit is with them, they can do all things. They are strong in the Lord — strong to turn the wicked from the error of their ways, and to edify the church. They become a life-giving savor. Through them, as God's ministers, sinners are

born again, and the kingdom of Christ is enlarged. And whatever may be present appearances, if those who preach the gospel are faithful to their trust, and seek the blessing of God, they will not labor in vain. Sooner or later they will have success — I say not how much. But any success in such a cause is a great and inestimable good, and will be followed by glorious consequences to them and to others. Here is matter of encouragement. If you go forth to the work in the spirit of love, and perseveringly preach the gospel in its simplicity, trusting in God for success, you will promote the glory of his grace and win souls to Christ.

What then is the specific influence of divine truth, when accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost? Is this influence a matter of consciousness? And can it be described? I think it can.

First. Divine truth in the hands of the Holy Spirit, *convinces men of sin*. To be convinced of sin, is to feel the influence of a particular portion of divine truth. The divine law, or the truth contained in the law, had this influence upon the Apostle Paul. He says, "I had not known sin, but by the law. For I had not known lust, (sinful desire,) except the law had said, thou shalt not covet" — "I was alive without the law once." This expresses his want of conviction, and his confidence in his own goodness. "But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. — And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The proper consideration of the law finally produced the conviction described in the following words. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Such was the influence of the law upon Paul; and such, in substance, is its influence upon all intelligent Christians. The truth uttered by Peter on the day of Pentecost, was the means employed by the Spirit to convince men of sin, and to lead them to inquire what they should do to be saved. Divine truth under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, discloses to sinners at the present day, the wickedness of their hearts, and their exposure to endless punishment, and shows them that they are utterly lost, unless God is pleased to have mercy upon them.

It is manifest that divine truth is *adapted* to produce this effect; — that it has in its own nature a real *fitness* to convince men of sin, if not resisted and counteracted by the perverseness of their hearts; just as the shining of the sun is fitted to give men light, unless they close their eyes against it. In regard to divine truth, all the want of fitness lies in the hearts of sinners. All the unfitness or want of adaptedness which exists, is found in them. As soon as their consciences are awakened and their hearts opened by the Spirit of God, the truths of the gospel, just as they are, have a perfect adaptedness to convince them of sin. Good seed is adapted to vegetate and grow and bear fruit in good ground, but not in a bed of sand.

Another portion of divine truth is efficacious to beget *faith in Christ.* I now speak with reference to those whose hearts the grace of God has prepared. The gospel declares the love of God in sending his Son to save them that are lost. It presents Christ Jesus before them in all his excellence and glory, and in his ability to save to the uttermost. And the effect of divine truth, thus brought before the minds of convinced and humbled sinners, is *saving faith.* They receive Christ in all his fulness. They trust in him. They choose to be in subjection to him. Thus faith, which is the gift of God, takes place in them as the proper effect of gospel truth. Truth is the means, and the necessary means, of bringing them to believe. "For how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" How can they trust in a Saviour who has not been made known to them?

Divine truth has an influence in eliciting and increasing all holy affections. God is infinitely holy, wise and good. This is a primary truth. The believer contemplates this truth. He beholds the glory of God; and beholding, he loves and adores. Such is the influence which this portion of truth has upon the renovated heart. Again. There are truths which, when clearly presented to the mind, and rightly considered, beget godly sorrow, humility, and self-abhorrence. There are other truths which impart strength and firmness to the believer, and so prepare him for arduous duties and severe sufferings. Other portions of truth

excite his compassion for the afflicted, and his love to the souls of men. And other truths make his heart tender and kind towards those who have injured him, and induce him sincerely to forgive them, and to labor and pray for their good. There are truths too, which produce tranquillity and peace in times of affliction and danger, and fill the heart with unutterable joy. Indeed the believer has no right exercises of mind, which are not produced, instrumentally, by the contemplation of some part of divine truth. If we would excite and strengthen any Christian grace in ourselves, we must familiarize our minds to a fit portion of truth. And if we would excite and strengthen any Christian grace in others, we must present a fit portion of truth to their attentive minds, and lead them to dwell upon it in devout meditation. We are rational and moral beings, and are made to be influenced and governed by rational and moral considerations, that is, by divine truth. And if we were rightly disposed, how great would be the power of truth over our hearts and lives! Under its efficacious influence, how should we grow in grace and be adorned with the beauties of holiness! And how deplorable is that blindness of mind and hardness of heart, which prevents this blessed influence of divine truth, and makes that, which should be a savor of life unto life, a savor of death unto death!

Is it, properly speaking, the duty of sinners to turn from sin, and to become obedient and holy?

It may seem strange that any doubt should be entertained on this subject. But inasmuch as the question often arises in the minds of men, it may be of use to give it a brief reply.

That sinners are bound in duty to become obedient and holy, is evident from the simple fact, that *God requires it of them.* He commands them to repent and be converted; to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts; to love God supremely, and to be holy as he is holy. Now the commands of such a being as God are perfectly just and reasonable, and it is the indispensable duty of all men to obey them. Rational and accountable creatures are most evidently bound to conform to the requirements

of their righteous and benevolent Creator. To deny that men are under obligation to love God supremely and to obey all his commands, is to deny that he is worthy of our love, and to charge him with giving commands which are unjust and oppressive.

That it is the duty of sinners to repent and become holy, is *the decision of conscience.* If conscience is awake and faithful, it will make this decision clearly and strongly. If I am conscious of being a *sinner*, I am conscious of being what I ought not to be. And this is the same as being conscious that I ought to be otherwise. If any one is insensible of his blame-worthiness in being a sinner, and of his obligation to be obedient and holy, his "conscience is seared with a hot iron." The ministers of Christ well know, that when the Holy Spirit visits the souls of sinners and causes the light of divine truth to shine within them, they no longer evade their obligation to obey God. Their being sinful is, in their enlightened judgment, the very reason why they should repent; and their being exceedingly depraved, is so much the more urgent reason for their becoming penitent and holy.

I have made these remarks, not because there is any uncertainty attending the subject, but because this is a point on which the minds of the impenitent and unawakened are full of fatal error. By the practice of sin, men stupefy their moral feelings. Through the deceitfulness of their hearts, they think, that as they are unholy, they cannot be justly required to be holy — that as they are enemies to God, their enmity is not their fault, and that they are under no obligation to love God. Thus they make sin an excuse for itself. A deceived heart has turned them aside. They see not, because they shut their eyes. They hear not, because they stop their ears. By their hardness and impenitence, they exclude themselves from the blessings of salvation, and treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.

In what light are we to regard those exercises of awakened sinners, which usually take place previously to regeneration?

The exercises referred to are, convictions of conscience as to the evil and danger of sin; fears of divine wrath; strong desires after happiness, together with all the serious meditations, prayers, and other efforts which are common in such cases.

My first remark in reply to this inquiry, is, that these exercises are not to be considered as having, in any degree, the nature of holiness. Holiness is peculiar to the regenerate. "He that loveth is born of God." Whatever may be the feelings and actions of the unrenewed; however clear their convictions of sin; however strongly excited their natural affections; how much soever they may do in the way of external reformation, and how earnest soever they may be in their attention to the means of grace; they are still destitute of holiness.

But may not awakened sinners make some *approximation* to holiness? By their earnest endeavors may they not attain to a condition less guilty and wretched, and nearer to that of believers?

Reply. Sinners in the state referred to may differ widely from each other, as to the *measure* of their sinfulness. Their unholy affections and actions may be criminal in very different degrees. And if the question is, whether sinners, while making the efforts referred to, are chargeable with less criminality than those who are in a state of carnal security; I am unable to give any answer which will hold true in all cases. There is, in this respect, as great a variety among awakened sinners, as among the unawakened. But it is, I apprehend, a general fact, that the exercises of awakened sinners, while impenitent, do not grow less sinful, but the contrary. And they are commonly convinced of this, in proportion as they become acquainted with their own hearts. To this conviction they indeed come reluctantly. They hope as long as they can, that they shall succeed in their endeavors to subdue sin and to obtain holiness. But so far as God gives them light, they see that their unregenerate efforts to improve their condition are in vain; that they grow nothing better, but rather worse; and that their selfish and stubborn hearts are not to be changed by such means as these. And it is sometimes the case,

that sinners are conscious of the most perverse and criminal feelings a short time previous to their renewal. But whether this is the case or not, they are at length taught, by their own experience, that the new birth is "not of the will of man, but of God."

That sinners, while impenitent, do not improve their condition, is manifest from the nature of the case. If it is their duty to repent, and obey the gospel, it follows, that by continuing impenitent and disobedient, they continually add to the amount of their criminality. And as to their present state, they evince a strength of sinful feeling according to the degree of light which they abuse, and the urgency of motives to repentance which they resist. The more conviction of conscience they have, the more guilty they are in disregarding it. Should a man be taken to the precincts of heaven, and there be permitted to behold the glory of Christ and the blessedness of the saints; and should he then be taken to the borders of hell, and behold the hatefulness and misery of sin as there displayed; and if after all this he should persist in his wicked ways and neglect the great salvation, his guilt would be exceedingly aggravated. It was on this principle that Jesus represented those who heard his instructions and witnessed his works, and yet continued in unbelief, to be more guilty than Tyre and Sidon. This principle applies equally to the case before us. That serious consideration, that excited conscience, that clear view of the importance of religion, which awakened sinners often have, are advantages which cannot be abused, without extraordinary guilt. Indulging enmity to God, when the excellence of his character is better understood; loving sin, when its malignity and danger are more clearly seen; and undervaluing the salvation of the soul, when the worth of it is more deeply felt — who can adequately conceive the criminality of all this?

But it must not be forgotten, that there is a great diversity in the degree of moral evil, which even in such cases exists in different individuals — a diversity which no one can comprehend, except that Being who searches the heart.

But although the exercises of awakened sinners have nothing of the nature of holiness, and make no approximation to it, and are of no moral worth in themselves; yet God is pleased, in the dispensation of his grace, to overrule them for good; particularly to make them the means of giving sinners just views of themselves, and to prepare them to see and feel that salvation is of God. Sinners under conviction generally have, for a time, but a slight conception of the depth and malignity of their moral disorder; and hence they imagine that they can obtain a cure by their own endeavors. But their endeavors, being prompted by a regard to their own selfish interest, prove unavailing. Thus God teaches them a new lesson. He impresses it upon their hearts, that their spiritual disease has a power and obstinacy which no human means can subdue; that they are the slaves of sin, and will continue in that wretched bondage, unless they are delivered by an act of sovereign mercy. He teaches them that they must be born again. If, after they are thus instructed, they repent, and obtain salvation; they will know who gave them repentance, and to whom they are indebted for salvation. It thus appears, that the earnest efforts of unregenerate sinners, though wholly destitute of holiness, are made the means of bringing them to that state of conscious guilt and self-despair, in which God so often interposes and shows his power to save. But let it never be forgotten, that this happy result is owing, not to any thing spiritually good in the convictions and doings of the unrenewed, but to the gracious agency of God. And it must be considered a most striking instance of his power and his grace, that he thus brings good out of evil, and, by means of those exercises of sinners which proceed from their selfish and impenitent hearts, prepares the way to make known to them the glory of redeeming mercy.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

WHAT DIRECTIONS SHALL MINISTERS GIVE TO THOSE WHO INQUIRE WHAT THEY SHALL DO TO BE SAVED?

I SHALL now call your attention to a subject, which is of great importance, and is specially interesting to the ministers of Christ. *What directions shall we give to sinners, particularly to those who are awakened to serious consideration, and are disposed to inquire what they shall do to be saved?*

As to the general manner in which we are to address the unregenerate; we learn from the example of the prophets, of Christ and the apostles, that we are to instruct them in the truths of religion; that we are to warn them of their guilt and danger; that we are to hold up before them both the mercies and terrors of the Lord, and by all the means which God has appointed, to persuade them to attend to the things which belong to their peace.

But my remarks will relate particularly to the case of those, who are disposed to inquire, what they shall do to be saved.

And here I remark, *first*, that God has not left us to frame an answer by our own wisdom, but has furnished an answer for us in his holy word. He has laid down a rule of duty, perfect and unalterable. And our business, as ambassadors of Christ, is, to make known that rule to our fellow men. In regard to every part of their conduct, we must give them the directions which are contained in the word of God. The sum of the moral law is, that we should love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as our-

selves. These two comprehensive precepts are to be earnestly inculcated upon all human beings — inculcated without any abatement on account of their degeneracy. The same as to the gospel. The message of mercy which it contains, and its directions how to obtain the blessings proffered, we must faithfully proclaim to all men. The peculiar commands of the gospel belong appropriately to men as sinners; they belong to them because they are sinners. Here our work is marked out for us with great plainness. We are to address the gracious offers of the gospel to those who are living in sin, and to persuade them to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that they may be saved.

Consider now, that a compliance with the commands of the law and the gospel, is an exercise of holiness. The best idea we can form of holiness is the idea of that supreme love to God, and that impartial love to our neighbor, which the law requires. And obedience to the requisitions of the gospel is as truly an exercise of holiness, as obedience to the law. To repent is to turn from transgression and to begin to obey the divine law; it is to begin to be holy. To believe in Christ, is to believe in a holy Saviour, implying love to his character, and subjection to his authority. The commands of the law and of the gospel are all perfectly just and reasonable. And what can be more suitable, than to exhort and urge sinners to do what is just and reasonable; and especially as their compliance with these reasonable commands is indispensable to their salvation. To repent and believe is required as the condition, on our part, of forgiveness and eternal life. If the commands of God are just and good — if he deserves our love and service — if sin is hateful and destructive, and salvation desirable and precious — and if Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour and worthy of our confidence; then we should exhort and beseech sinners to repent and believe, and to do it immediately. To say, that this is not their duty *now*, is to say, that the commands of God are not now just and reasonable, and therefore that we are not to enjoin it upon sinners as a present duty to obey.

This introduces my

Second remark, namely, that *when treating with sinners in re-*

gard to what they must do to be saved, we should take care not to substitute any other directions in the place of those which God has given in his word. Directions are sometimes given which do not require and are not intended to require any thing morally right and acceptable to God, but which enjoin something else in the place of repentance, something intended to be preparatory to it, such as attention to external means, and those serious endeavors and prayers which fall short of the beginning of holiness. My position is, that when sinners inquire what they shall do to be saved, or when we direct them what to do in order to salvation, we must take care not to substitute any directions of our own in place of those which God has given in his word.

One reason for this is, that such directions would interfere with the commands of God. These commands require repentance, faith and love, which are holy exercises. These holy exercises are the duty, the immediate duty of all sinners, duly instructed, and ought to occupy their minds at the present time. Now if you direct them to other exercises different from these, and entirely wanting in holiness, you do certainly interfere with the commands of God. It is impossible for those whom you address, to observe your directions, which require what is not holy, and at the same time to observe the divine commands, which require holiness. It is clear then, that such directions as you give, interfere with the authority of God. For no one can follow them without neglecting for the time to obey God.

Again. These inferior directions have a tendency to hinder the conversion of sinners. For so long as they satisfy themselves with observing such directions, they keep themselves in an unconverted state; for the directions enjoin nothing but unregenerate doings. And how can any one repent, while he is occupied in doing that which is not repentance? How can he believe, while he puts forth those exercises only, which are destitute of faith? To obtain salvation, the sinner must go beyond these defective directions, must rise above these unregenerate exercises, and attain to those which constitute a compliance with the requisitions of the gospel. And why should we do anything to hinder or delay this?

But I must say further, that the directions under consideration not only tend to hinder or delay conversion, but may entirely *prevent* it. An unregenerate man, deeply affected with the solemn truths which you delivered to him on the Sabbath, comes to you in the evening, and asks you, what he shall do to be saved. You direct him to exercises which fall short of repentance and faith — exercises which he may have while he remains an enemy to God. He complies with your directions, but dies before the return of the Lord's day. He inquired for the way of salvation; he followed your directions, but failed of obtaining salvation. You may say, — if you had faithfully exhorted him to repent and believe, he might still have neglected to comply, and so failed of salvation. True; he might have done so. But that would have been *his* fault, not yours. If however he had opened his heart to instruction, and complied with the Scriptural directions you gave him, he would have been saved. This is sufficient to settle the point before us. Shall we give directions which, if followed, will secure salvation? Or shall we give those which, so long as they are followed, will fail of securing salvation? Which of these proceedings is most agreeable to the word of God, and most salutary in its tendency?

In regard to the instructions which I have animadverted upon, there is a general consideration which weighs much in my mind; namely; that all the good ends which are aimed at by those who give them, may be accomplished more certainly and fully by those directions, which are strictly conformed to Scripture.

They who direct the sinner to exercises which fall short of holiness, do it in order to keep up and increase his attention to the subject of religion; to rouse him to more serious efforts; to lead him on to better views of divine truth, and to a deeper conviction that he is depraved and lost; and thus to prepare him to receive salvation as an unmerited favor, and to give the glory of it to God alone. These are indeed exceedingly important ends; and there can be no doubt that in many instances they are, through the mercy of God, promoted in some measure by means of the directions referred to. What I maintain is, that they may be promoted

more certainly and in a higher degree by those directions, which exactly correspond with the inspired standard.

The directions for which I contend, are the unalterable requisitions of the law and the gospel — requisitions which are perfectly reasonable, just and good, and which exhibit the true standard of human duty. Now if the mind of the sinner is duly fixed upon this divine standard, he must attain to a clearer view of his obligations and the guilt of disobedience, than if he were led to contemplate a lower standard, — a standard to which he might conform without holiness. If you would produce in the sinner a deep conviction of the desperate wickedness of his heart, of the evil of impenitence and unbelief, and the inexcusable criminality of remaining in a state of enmity against God, you must lead him to dwell, in serious contemplation, upon the holy requirements of the word of God, and must urge upon his conscience his perfect obligation to an immediate compliance. He will naturally measure his obligations, and, of course, his guilt, by the requisitions inculcated upon him by those who speak to him in the name of God. If those requisitions are different from the requisitions of God's word — if you direct him to those doings which fall short of holiness, and if he receives your directions as of divine authority, and judges himself by them, the natural consequence will be, that he will consider himself excusable for the want of holiness. If he does in any considerable degree, follow your directions, he will satisfy himself that he has done his duty; and though still impenitent and unsanctified, will think favorably of his state. Whereas, if he were led to measure his obligation and his guilt by the right standard, he would be compelled to give up his favorable opinion of himself and adopt a very humiliating view of his own heart and life.

It is moreover obvious, that the sinner who fixes his eye upon the high and perfect standard of duty which the Scriptures present before him, and who thus attains to a deep conviction of his depravity, guilt and danger, will ordinarily be excited to more strenuous efforts, than one whose conviction is less deep and thorough. The method then which I recommend has, even in this

respect, an advantage above the other. With a moderate and defective conviction, a sinner may be roused to some serious endeavors to better his condition. But his endeavors will be more earnest and intense in proportion as he has a clearer apprehension of his guilt and wretchedness. When a sinner turns his thoughts undividedly upon the demands of the law and the gospel, and upon the justice of those demands, when he has a decided impression that he is really bound in duty to repent and turn from sin, and that immediately; to believe in Christ and become holy without delay — with this impression, he will be waked up to the most vigorous efforts to obtain deliverance from the bondage of sin. How inferior in point of seriousness and intensity must be the efforts of one, whose mind is turned off from the high claims of the law and the gospel, and who contents himself with those directions which require nothing above the reach of unregeneracy! Those evangelical ministers and writers, who give the defective directions against which I object, regard the efforts which they may induce the sinner to make, as preparatory to that more thorough conviction of guilt and ruin, which is generally followed by the special operation of the Holy Spirit in bringing the sinner to faith in Christ and the commencement of a new life. The importance of such conviction must not be overlooked. And it is a well known fact, that God generally accomplishes it previously to the manifestation of his mercy in the renewal of the heart; and that he thus effectually teaches his people from the commencement of the Christian life, that salvation is wholly of God. And what I maintain is, that those instructions and directions which explain and inculcate the holy requisitions of the law and the gospel are, under God, far better suited to accomplish this preparatory work of growing seriousness and finally of thorough conviction, than those directions which take lower ground. The preparatory work intended implies that the high and holy requirements of the law and gospel are seen and felt to be perfectly just and right, and that they ought to be instantly complied with. And there are no means by which we can so reasonably hope to bring sinners to see and feel this, as by clearly explaining to them and laboring to

impress on their consciences and hearts, the very demands which a holy and merciful God makes upon them. Suppose again, that you direct them to other duties, so called — duties which imply no repentance, no faith, no love. And suppose they do those duties, as you direct. What then? Why, the very fact that they have faithfully followed your directions, will tend to beget within them self-complacent thoughts, and a hope of obtaining salvation by their own unsanctified doings, and thus to keep them from being thoroughly convinced that they have destroyed themselves, and that salvation is of God. And to make the best of it, if the thing stops here, certain ruin will be the consequence. If you would do any thing to purpose with sinners in the state above mentioned, you must go over the whole ground again, and give them instruction according to the inspired standard. You must plainly inform them, that all their feelings and endeavors, while impenitent, will avail nothing. You must show them, that a holy God requires repentance, faith, and love, and must enforce these reasonable duties upon them by the most weighty sanctions. That is, you must do in the end what should have been done before; and you must do it under the disadvantage of having much to undo which has resulted from your previous directions; under the disadvantage too of an apparent inconsistency. For when you come to pursue the course last mentioned, will not the sinner who has been following your previous directions, be very apt to think that he has been imposed upon by unauthorized representations, and to ask why you did not tell him before that God really required of him immediate repentance and faith, and that these requisitions were entirely just, and that nothing short of a cordial compliance could be acceptable to God, or entitle him to salvation? May he not say, that, while he was conforming to your instructions, he verily thought he was doing what was right; that he could not suppose that a minister of the gospel would direct him to any thing which would not be acceptable to God, particularly on a subject so momentous as the salvation of the soul; but that he now finds that he has been mistaken — that all he has done is nothing, and that his immediate and imperative duty is to repent

and believe in Christ? He asks, why he was not informed of all this before; or, if it was in any manner signified to him, why his mind was diverted from it by directions of so different a character. Here is the difficulty. Such a double course creates confusion. It divides the attention of the sinner; misguides his conscience; blunts the edge of divine truth; excites delusive expectations, and prevents that full conviction of the righteous claims of God, which prepares the way for cordial faith and obedience.

It has, I trust, been made sufficiently evident, that all the desirable ends aimed at by those who give a sinner the lower class of directions under consideration, may be accomplished more certainly and in a higher degree by simply explaining and earnestly inculcating the just and holy requisitions of God's word. So that a careful observance of the principle which I have advocated, instead of occasioning any loss of what is desirable, will be attended with gain.

The mode of addressing sinners which I have recommended is exceedingly *plain and simple*, and yet has the advantage of *great variety;* and on all these accounts it is adapted to the different characters and circumstances of those whom we are called to instruct.

The divine requisitions are *plain;* and those to whom they are addressed, cannot fail to understand them, except through their own fault. They are also *simple*. Though many in number, they all enjoin upon us substantially the same thing, that is, *holiness*. But the directions of Scripture have a remarkable variety — a variety which is suited to all the characters and circumstances of men, and which gives room for all possible forms of awakening, impressive and melting address from the ministers of Christ.

It would be a great mistake to suppose, as some appear to have done, that what I have called the simple directions of Scripture, begin and end with the repetition of the words, *submit*, *repent*, *believe*. The Lord Jesus, and the apostles and prophets address themselves to sinners in an almost endless variety of forms; sometimes in the way of direct requisition, sometimes in the way of expostulation, persuasion, and intreaty; and un-

der each of these heads there is a striking variety. This is specially true with the Scripture directions as to duty. The most general and comprehensive of these is the call to *repent* and *believe*. But the Scriptures are not restricted to these forms. They require sinners to consider their ways, to receive instruction, to turn from their evil courses, to abandon their sins, to cease to do evil and learn to do well, to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts, to pray, to call upon God, to seek the Lord, to look unto Jesus, etc. Let any one examine the first and the fifty-fifth chapters of Isaiah, and other similar portions of the word of God, and see what various commands, exhortations, warnings and intreaties they exhibit, and what a storehouse they contain for the use of religious teachers.

But it is still true, that when the sacred writers give us an account of the instructions and directions which were addressed to sinners, they do it in a very summary way. How brief, for example, is their description of the preaching of John Baptist, and of Jesus! "They preached, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Again, it is said of Jesus, that "he preached, saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." During Christ's ministry, he sent out the twelve apostles; and it is merely said, "they preached that men should repent." Jesus represents it as the object of his advent, "to call sinners to repentance." And Paul describes his preaching at Ephesus merely by saying, that he "testified both to Jews and Greeks repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." And when sinners inquired what they should do to be saved, the apostles directed them to believe in Christ. .But the preaching of Christ and the apostles was not made up of these brief expressions merely, but extended to all the counsel of God, to all the doctrines and duties of religion. They preached repentance. But in preaching repentance, they doubtless explained the nature and necessity of repentance, and urged the various considerations which were suited to influence sinners to repent. And when they directed men to believe the gospel, they set forth

the doctrines of the gospel. They showed that man is a sinner, and Christ the only Saviour, and that a cleaving to him in faith and obedience is the only way to obtain forgiveness and eternal life. The same is true in other cases. There is then a wide field open before us; a rich variety of truths which we are to teach. But whatever we do in the various branches of instruction, it must be our constant endeavor to bring men to comply with the requisitions of the gospel. If men are ignorant, we must labor to make them acquainted with the truth — must teach them the character and law of God, and their own depravity and guilt. We must teach them the necessity of being born of the Spirit. We must preach Christ to them, and set him forth in all his perfections, offices and blessings. We must announce to them, in God's name, the commands of the gospel and exhort them to a cordial obedience, as the only thing which can be acceptable to God and secure their salvation. We must press *immediate* obedience to the calls of the gospel, as altogether reasonable, as the work which they are sacredly bound to do without delay, and which they cannot neglect a single moment, without augmenting their guilt. We must show them that they have no excuse for the least postponement; that reason, and conscience, the authority of God and their own eternal welfare require them to submit to Christ and receive his gracious offers now. We must show them, that delaying repentance, or substituting any thing else in its place, is rebellion; that God deserves their supreme love, and deserves it now; that sin deserves their unmingled abhorrence, and deserves it now; that Christ is an all-sufficient and glorious Saviour, and is worthy of their cordial trust and obedience, and is worthy of it now. And whether we exhort them to repent, to believe, or to pray — to read or to hear, or to do anything else which God requires, we must exhort them to do it *as* God requires — to do it from the heart, and with a real desire for spiritual blessings.

Let me add, that the mode of addressing sinners which I have thus freely recommended, has the advantage of being more directly and entirely approved by conscience, than any other. There

is nothing which rational beings look upon with so ready and decided an approbation, and feel to be so obligatory upon them, as supreme love to one who is supremely excellent and amiable, confidence in one who is infinitely powerful and good, and obedience to one who has a rightful authority over them. If you urge these high and sacred duties, you have conscience on your side. And you have a stronger decision of conscience in favor of what you teach, than if you take lower ground, and inculcate inferior duties. Suppose, for example, you merely tell sinners, it is their duty to attend public worship, and listen to the instructions of the Sanctuary. It is very possible they may doubt this, as it is an external service, and becomes a duty only in subserviency to a higher object. To convince them of their obligation to attend public worship, you may find it necessary to bring forward principles of superior clearness and force, such as the reverence they should feel for the authority of God, and the ready submission they owe to whatever he commands or appoints; the worth of salvation, and the connection it has with the instructions and prayers of the Sanctuary, and other principles of like kind. In order to persuade them of their obligation to observe the institution and perform the outward service above mentioned, you must impress upon them these more simple and original principles and these more obvious and certain obligations. The former obligation, when admitted by them, is a secondary obligation, and has far less power over the moral faculties, than a primary obligation. However they may dispose of the former, they cannot evade the latter. Ask them, is it not your duty to love and adore the God who made you and who possesses all possible perfection? Is it not your duty to be grateful for his constant kindness? Is it not right for you to take care of your own immortal soul, and to commit it to him who is able to save? Ought you not to repent of sin, and to obey the commands of a wise and benevolent Sovereign? Every one who is honest, will answer, yes. It is an obligation which cannot be evaded — an obligation which is obvious, and sacred, and immutable. Keep the sinner's attention undividedly to this, and his conscience will speak to him so plainly and so loudly that he must hear; and if

he refuses to submit, it will utter a sentence of condemnation which will fill his guilty soul with terror.

But here a question may arise in your minds: — Do not the Scriptures furnish examples of that mode of addressing sinners which has here been represented as unscriptural? Are they not called upon to seek after God, to strive, to ask, to pray, etc.? I answer, yes. But it is evident that these are only so many ways of setting forth the proper exercises of the penitent and contrite. When God in his word requires these exercises, he most certainly requires that they should be performed in some specific manner — either with a penitent heart, or an impenitent — either with love to holiness, or with love to sin. If we say that in the texts referred to, God requires exercises which are without any degree of holiness, and which proceed from an impenitent, unrenewed heart; then we have the strange fact to dispose of, that sinners may render an acceptable service to God without any degree of holiness; — for doubtless God will accept just such service as he requires; and so unconverted men, retaining their unbelieving, impenitent heart, may perform a service which God requires and will accept. How then is it true, that without faith it is impossible to please God, and that all unbelievers are under condemnation?

Do you say, that God requires these things of sinners without determining how they are to be done? But if God has not determined this, who shall determine it? And how can it be known, whether sinners truly obey, or not? And it will be natural to ask, why God has not determined in what manner the things required of sinners shall be performed, that is, with what feelings of heart he would have sinners seek, and strive, and pray. Is it a matter of indifference with him who looketh on the heart, whether sinners strive and pray with right feelings of heart, or not? And if it is a matter of indifference with God, whether men strive and pray with right feelings, or not — from love to him, or from an opposite motive; then what becomes of the first and great command, which requires all men to love God supremely? Is it disannulled? And if it is disannulled — if sinners are released

from all obligation to obey it; I ask *why* they are released? Is it because they are sinners, and are not disposed to obey? And are they, for the same reason, released from their obligation to obey all the other divine commands? The general current of Scripture precepts, and the holy character of God, make it evident, that when he requires sinners to seek, to strive, to pray, he requires them to do it with sincerity of heart, with faith in Christ, and with a real love to the salvation which they seek, and that he cannot accept them on any other terms. *Seeking after God* is a Scripture phrase, which denotes a cordial desire after God as the chief good, and a serious use of the means which he has appointed for obtaining his favor. The phrase is often employed to designate the great business of good men through life. Their piety is a constant *seeking after God*. And when sinners are required to seek after God, they are required to commence a life of piety. And the promise is, that they shall find him, if they seek him with the whole heart.

The same as to *striving*. Jesus said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." He meant to direct to efforts which would be successful, as appears from what he immediately adds; "for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." He thus showed that everything depended on the kind of efforts which he enjoined, as other efforts would fail of success. "If a man strive for masteries," says an Apostle, "yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." And he speaks of Christians as "striving in their prayers." And in reference to the work of his apostleship, he speaks of himself "as striving according to the divine power which worked in him mightily.' *Striving* in Scripture use denotes great earnestness — intense effort in the work of religion.

The passage in which Christ required men to ask, that they might receive, and to knock that it might be opened unto them, must be understood in the same sense. They are required to ask for the influence of the Spirit with importunity, and from a sincere desire to obtain that unspeakable good. To whom, but to those who ask with a penitent, believing heart, has God promised to give that precious blessing?

As to prayer, God does indeed require it of all men. But what is the prayer which he requires? It is prayer offered up in faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." It must be offered up in the name of Christ, and with a hearty reliance upon him as a Saviour. It must be attended with repentance and confession, and with a disposition to do the will of God. Such, according to the Scriptures, must be the prayer which will be acceptable to God, and will secure a gracious answer. If any one who prays is destitute of faith; if he is not penitent and contrite; if he has not, in some measure, a heart to do the will of God; his prayer is an abomination. While, then, we earnestly exhort sinners to pray, we must not leave them to think, that the prayer of those who have no repentance or faith and who regard iniquity in their heart, will secure the blessings of salvation. We must faithfully teach them, that it is a most reasonable and indispensable duty to pray, and to pray as God requires.

A careful examination of the word of God will convince you, that his commands are all harmonious, and that there is no one of them which, taken according to its true intent, does not require a penitent, obedient heart. If we should take different ground, and represent that any feelings, desires, endeavors, or prayers will be acceptable to God and secure spiritual blessings, without repentance, faith, or love; we should do what would be inconsistent with the holiness of God, and with the just and immutable teachings of his word.

I have been thus particular in the treatment of this subject, because I deem it of great importance, both as it relates to the honor of God and the spiritual interests of men. In itself, it would seem to be encumbered with no special difficulty. The practice of inspired men, in directing sinners how to obtain salvation, is perfectly plain and satisfactory. But it has been involved in obscurity by the subtle objections of an unhumbled, self-justifying heart, and I must say too, by the manner in which it has been treated by some gospel ministers, who have appeared to

think that the high commands of God must, in some way, be so modified, that sinners may perform an acceptable service, for a time at least, without either repentance or faith. Against this mistake we ought to guard, both in the matter and manner of our instructions, and scrupulously to follow our infallible guide. We must never forget, that God himself has informed us what he requires of sinners as necessary to salvation, and what directions we are to give them. The duty assigned to us is to declare and explain his requirements, and, by proper motives, to enforce them; to persuade sinners to do just what God commands, and what a faithful conscience and a just regard to their own eternal interest require — always taking part with God, vindicating the righteousness and goodness of all his requirements, and exposing the wickedness and inexcusableness of sinners in refusing a cordial obedience.

But you may ask, why the manner of addressing sinners which I have represented as unscriptural, has not been more notoriously hurtful in its effects; especially why some of those ministers, who have adopted it, have preached with so much success.

I grant that some of the most faithful and successful ministers have done, in part, what I regard as unscriptural; I say, in part. They have prescribed to sinners, as duties, a class of exercises which imply neither repentance nor faith, and have made much of these duties, as preparatory to a saving conversion. Now if they had contented themselves with inculcating these unregenerate doings, and had neglected to enforce the high demands of God in the law and in the gospel, the results must have been deplorable indeed. But this has not been the case. For though they have directed sinners to do a variety of things, which imply no repentance or faith, they have not stopped here, but have inculcated the highest claims of the law and the gospel as perfectly righteous and perfectly obligatory, and have exhorted and entreated sinners to comply with them, and to comply with them immediately, that is, at the very time, when, according to the lower set of directions, the persons addressed were to be employed in exercises of a very different kind. The two modes of

address are plainly inconsistent with each other, as it is impossible for any person to comply truly with one of these classes of directions, without for the time neglecting the other. But notwithstanding this inconsistency, which is generally passed by without being much thought of, the instructions of such ministers, taken together, have been productive of very salutary effects. The tendency of what is unscriptural has been counteracted or neutralized by the greater proportion of what is Scriptural. The high claims of the law and the gospel which are held forth, may have a paramount influence over the minds of sinners, and may raise them above the danger to which they would otherwise be exposed by the lower directions given. It is the amount of truth which produces the result. The inconsiderable portion of error which is intermingled, though in itself of bad tendency, does not prevent, though it may diminish, the good effect of the great body of truth. Were it not for this happy circumstance — which we owe to the forbearance and mercy of God — no human instructions would be safe, because no human instructions can be supposed to contain pure truth, free from all mixture of error.

In the way of objection against what I have advanced, it may be said, that sinners, in their depraved and unregenerate state, are incapable of complying with the higher class of directions above mentioned, and that it would seem expedient to prescribe such exercises as are within the reach of the unregenerate mind. In reply to this, it would be sufficient to repeat what has been suggested in previous Lectures, that the depravity of men is not such as to interfere with their obligation to obey the divine commands; and to refer to the example of inspired teachers, who uniformly addressed to sinners, however depraved, the unqualified demands of the law and the gospel, and, in the name of God, required of them an immediate compliance. It is the duty of all the ministers of Christ to follow in the steps of those who were divinely commissioned to declare the counsel of God.

I shall notice one more argument which has been used in favor of the lower class of directions to sinners, namely, that God actually uses unregenerate doings, as a means of preparing sinners to receive

the grace of the gospel; and that it is therefore proper for us to direct them to just such doings — thus falling in with the methods of divine providence.

I admit the fact stated, but not the inference. The methods of God's sovereign providence cannot be regarded as the rule of our duty. In some instances, within my knowledge, God has made use of the excess of profaneness and wickedness in sinners, as a means of awakening their consciences and bringing them to repentance. And we know that in one way or another he will overrule all the wickedness of man for the accomplishment of good ends. But who, except the impious scoffer, will infer from this, that wickedness ought to be either committed, or prescribed as a duty? The backslidings of Christians are, in the economy of grace, made the means of humbling them, and exciting their gratitude to God for his forbearance and mercy. But who ever, on this account, thinks proper to direct Christians to backslide? God, as Sovereign of the world, has his province and his prerogative. And his province and prerogative is to direct and control all creatures and events according to his own wise and holy will. Man has *his* province — a province assigned to him by the wisdom of his Creator. It is the province of a *subject;* and his duties are marked out for him in the precepts of the law and the gospel. As ambassadors of Christ, we have *our* province — our appropriate work. We are not to make a law for apostate man, but to proclaim the law which God has made — to require of the sinner just what God requires; to forbid what God forbids; to encourage him by promises and to alarm by threats, just as God authorizes us — never going out of our province — never undertaking to control events, or to remodel the divine commands — never meddling with anything but our own appropriate work. How desirable and excellent this order of things! God acting as God, and doing his own holy and benevolent work; man acting in his place as a subject, and conforming to the will of his righteous Sovereign; and ministers acting in their appropriate office, as servants and messengers of Christ, and proclaiming, unaltered, his invitations, commands, and promises.

One thing more. The mode of ministerial address which I have endeavored to defend, has the recommendation of being in agreement with the special work of the Holy Spirit. What is the aim of the Spirit, when he comes with saving mercy to the souls of sinners? What does he do? He convinces them of sin, and urges them to forsake it. He directs their thoughts to the Saviour, and impresses them with the duty of faith in him and submission to his authority. He reveals to them the glory of God, and shows them their obligation to love him with all the heart. He gives countenance to nothing but holiness. And when his influence is effectual in sinners, they repent, they believe, they love and obey, just as the word of God requires them to do. And whatever they may do with an impenitent, unbelieving heart, the Spirit teaches them that it is of no avail — that God cannot look upon it with approbation, and that they ought, without delay, to comply with the reasonable demands of the gospel. Now we shall coöperate with the Holy Spirit, if we teach, and direct, and persuade in our ministry, as he teaches, directs, and persuades in the souls of those whom he visits in mercy. Thus all is true and holy in the requirements of the law and the gospel; all is benevolent and holy in the work of Christ and in the agency of the Spirit; and all is faithful and holy in the teachings of his ministers; — and there is nothing wrong but in the hearts of unbelieving, rebellious men; and that wrong ceases so far as they obey the united teachings of the word, the Spirit, and the ministers of Christ.

LECTURE XC.

EVIDENCES OF THE NEW BIRTH. GENERAL RULE OF JUDGMENT. DIFFICULTIES OF APPLYING THE RULE TO INDIVIDUALS. CAUTIONS TO BE OBSERVED.

HAVING discussed the subject of regeneration in various points of view, I shall now consider the evidences of it, or the manner in which it is made known. In what way then, or by what means are we to judge, whether the Spirit of God has wrought a saving change in ourselves or others?

The general answer to this inquiry is found in the declaration of Christ; "Ye shall know them by their fruits." His illustration of this is taken from the natural world. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

The character of man cannot be known by us, as it is by God, who looks on the heart, and knows perfectly, without means, and without any liability to mistake, all the affections and habits of the mind. All the knowledge we can attain on the subject, must be derived from what is visible to us. The nature of a tree is known by its fruit. We may sometimes undertake to judge of a tree, which has not as yet borne any fruit. But as soon as the fruit appears, its quality determines our opinion of the quality of the tree.

The instructions of Christ, however, do not imply, that we can obtain an *infallible* knowledge of the characters of men. They only imply, that so far as it belongs to us in the present world to

judge of our fellow creatures, we are to do it by observing their conduct. If their actions are right, we must conclude that their character is right. Actions which are *really good*, are a certain proof of a good character. But actions may appear to us to be good, which are not so in reality. We should be aware of this. And the remembrance of our liability to mistake should have a proper influence upon us, whenever we form an opinion of the characters of men.

In judging of our own character, we are to proceed on the same general principle. There is however a plain difference between the two cases. We can have a more extensive and particular acquaintance with our own outward actions, than with those of others. And as to the whole range of inward affections, dispositions and motives — we are directly *conscious* of them in ourselves; but as they exist in others, we know them only in the way of inference from their visible conduct. So that, if we were free from partiality, we should be under far better advantages for judging of ourselves, than for judging of others. But so great is our partiality to ourselves, and so blinding is the influence of self-love, that notwithstanding the peculiar advantages which we possess for forming a right judgment of ourselves, we are generally more liable to mistake in regard to our own character, than in regard to the character of others.

The Holy Spirit, the supreme agent in renewing sinners, is invisible. His agency, in itself, separately from its effects, is also invisible. We are acquainted with the divine Spirit and with his agency in the renovation of the heart, in the same way as we are acquainted with the divine power and agency in the resurrection of Christ. If you had been looking steadfastly upon the body of Jesus in the tomb at the time of its resurrection, what would you have seen? Would you have seen God himself, the infinite *Spirit*, in his own nature? No. Would you have seen *God's power*, as an attribute of his own infinite mind? No. Would you have seen the *divine act itself*, from which the resurrection followed as an effect? No. You could have seen nothing but the effect produced — the lifeless body revived — the body which was dead,

living and moving. And you could have had no evidence that such an act of divine power had taken place, or that the principle of life had been imparted, except from the visible effects which followed in the state and actions of the reanimated body. The same as to creation. If God were to create a new world, and you were to be spectators of the work, what would you behold? A world which did not before exist, now existing. You would see the effect; the invisible cause you would infer. The manner of the new birth is illustrated by the motion of the wind. The effects of it we behold. But the wind itself and its motion are invisible. It is impossible for us to look upon the mind itself, and see its faculties, its qualities, or even its existence, except by means of its visible actions.

This is the principle on which the sacred writers proceed whenever they undertake to show us how to judge whether men are renewed or not. Thus, the Apostle John represents *love* as an evidence of regeneration. — "Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God." He also represents *faith* as an evidence of a regenerate state. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." He speaks in the same way of a victory over the world. "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world." Renouncing sin and living in obedience to God, is mentioned as another characteristic of the regenerate. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." It is just as true of other branches of holiness, as of those mentioned by this Apostle, that they are evidences of regeneration. Penitence and humility, love to God's law, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, compassion for the souls of men, delight in prayer, the spirit of forgiveness and self-denial — these are all fruits of the Spirit, and they show that he who possesses them is born of the Spirit.

But if men are known by their fruits, whence arises the difficulty of forming a right judgment respecting their character, and the manifest danger of falling into mistakes? If we find the fruit of a tree to be figs, are we not sure the tree is a fig tree? If we find grapes, do we not know that they grow from a grape-vine? In like manner, if men bear the fruits of holiness, may

we not conclude with certainty that they are in a regenerate state ?

Such indeed would be our conclusion, could we certainly determine the nature of the fruit. But how often do we find it impossible to do this ! Here we come upon the circumstances which occasion the well-known difficulty of forming a right judgment of the characters of men.

In the first place, it is frequently if not generally the case, that those who are regenerate, *exercise holy affections in only a low degree, and render only a defective obedience to the divine commands.* Their love to God, their faith in Christ, and their hatred of sin are so feeble, and exert so imperfect an influence on the life, that it is hard to determine whether the heart is renewed or not. How it comes to pass, that the holy affections of those who are born again are so feeble and imperfect, I shall not now inquire. The fact is obvious. And the consequence is, that we are in danger of judging those to be unregenerate, in whom the work of sanctification is really commenced. Their spiritual life is not sufficiently developed to prove clearly that it exists. This view of the subject should guard us against forming too confident a conclusion against those, whose evidence of piety is at present defective. To decide against them might be a mistake. And it might be a mistake to decide in their favor. The dictate of wisdom, in such a case, is, to suspend our judgment, till time and circumstances enable us to form a more safe and correct opinion.

But here a particular danger occurs. Persons learn from reading and observation, that those who are considered to be real Christians, have generally but a low degree of religious affection, and obey God only in an imperfect manner. Hence, although destitute of holiness, they are inclined to think well of their own state, because there is something in their feelings and conduct which is, in their view, equal to what they see in Christians. Thus they abuse the doctrine of the imperfection of Christians ; and because others are thought to be regenerate, who have but a low degree of piety, they think themselves regenerate, when they have none.

But let it not be supposed from these remarks, that a low degree of holy affection and obedience necessarily belongs to Christians at the commencement or at any subsequent stage of their piety. Many Christians — many even of those who have been recently converted, exhibit such strength of holy affection, and such sincerity and earnestness in their obedience, as to afford very satisfactory evidence that they have been born of the Spirit. This higher degree of piety is to be acknowledged as a signal effect of divine influence ; and in those instances where it exists, it prevents the difficulty above mentioned.

But secondly; the difficulty arising from the low degree of pious affections, is greatly increased by the *mixture of other affections of an opposite character*. If right affections, though feeble, were found alone, they might soon afford satisfactory evidence of regeneration. But this evidence is obscured by the sinful affections which are intermingled. And it is a lamentable fact, that in many, I will not say most Christians, sinful affections seem to constitute the greater part. This fact is not only lamentable, but astonishing, and ought to cause the deepest humility and shame. Who could believe such a thing, were it not made evident by Scripture and experience, as that sinners, who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the blessedness of reconciliation with God, would ever forget their God and Saviour, and cleave to the world, and yield to the influence of selfish, earthly desires ? Yet many know this to their sorrow. And they know how difficult it is, amid this prevalence of earthly affections, to discover any clear signs of sanctification. For such affections not only occupy the place in the mind, which ought to be occupied by holy love, but they extinguish the light of the soul, and render it incapable of discerning spiritual things, or of judging between what is holy and what is unholy.

Thirdly, the difficulty is still further increased by the circumstance, that *so many affections have an appearance of holiness, when they are destitute of the reality*. The tree is indeed known by the fruit. But suppose that, while there is in fact no fruit

which is truly good, there is much which appears to be good. Is it not difficult for those who notice this appearance of good fruit, to know the quality of the tree? The general rule which has been stated, is true and important. The tree is known by the fruit. There is no other rule which we are capable of applying. But if circumstances occur which make it impossible or difficult for us to determine what the fruit is, it will be equally impossible or difficult to determine what is the quality of the tree. So in regard to character. Holy exercises furnish real evidence of regeneration. But where is the evidence, when we are unable to know whether there are any holy exercises, or not?

Fourthly. There is one more circumstance, which renders it difficult for Christians to form a satisfactory opinion of their character; namely, that *their right exercises are so often interrupted.* Could we find a continued series of good exercises, even though deficient in strength, we should have opportunity to examine them; and might at length be satisfied that they are the genuine fruits of the Spirit. But if we have right affections, how soon are they interrupted! How soon do other feelings arise, and change the posture of the mind! *Now* the tree bears good fruit; *now* bad. What confusion does this create in our attempts to determine what the tree is!

Other circumstances might be mentioned; but these are sufficient to account for it, that so many Christians, both at the beginning and through the whole progress of their spiritual life, are subject to doubts, and enjoy so little of the comforts of hope. The same circumstances expose us to mistakes in regard to the characters of others.

Having considered the general rule by which we are to judge of characters, and various difficulties attending the application of the rule in regard both to ourselves and to others; I proceed to remark, that *the evidence of regeneration exists in a great variety of degrees.* This evidence will generally be clear and satisfactory to Christians in proportion to the strength and permanence of their pious affections. The degree of repentance, faith and love among Christians is exceedingly various. It is hardly to be

supposed that any two of them have exactly the same measure of holiness. This measure varies also in each individual Christian at different times. The pious affections of a young convert may be strong and elevated, and may thus make it manifest, that he is indeed born of the Spirit. But his affections may afterwards become low and feeble; and he may wholly or in part lose the evidence of his renewal. Then he may be roused from his spiritual sloth, and attain to higher exercises of piety than ever before, and may in this way attain to proportionably clearer evidence of Christian character.

It is a question not easily answered, how far a Christian in a time of spiritual declension may consider the feelings he had and the actions he performed in his better days, as a proof that he is a child of God. The recollection of former love, obedience and joy may have and ought to have some influence upon a Christian in seasons of backsliding and darkness. It ought, at least, to encourage and excite him to return to God, and to hope in his mercy. In a qualified sense, past exercises of piety may be regarded as indications that the Holy Spirit has begun his saving work in the heart. And regarding them in this light may be not only safe, but salutary, if it leads the believer to a thorough repentance, to gratitude, and to watchfulness against sin. But it is often, if not generally true, that a Christian who has wandered from God, is incapable of enjoying the comforts of religion; and that, while he refuses to return from his wandering, any attempt to derive evidence of his good estate from his past experience, would be injurious to his spiritual interests. The proper business of one in such a state is penitently to confess his sins, to return to God, to exercise faith in Christ, and to walk in newness of life. Let him do this, and he will have no occasion to rely upon former experience. His repentance, his return to God, his faith, and his holy obedience, will at once furnish evidence of his happy state. As to comfort — he ought never to make it a direct and primary object. Ordinarily he will enjoy as much as is suitable to his condition. And his enjoyment will be more pure and more exquisite, when he has it without seeking it.

Here is a suitable place to suggest another view of the subject, which I regard as of great practical importance, especially to ministers of the gospel; that is, *the manifest impropriety of forming and expressing a confident conclusion that sinners are converted, before they have had sufficient time to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.* I say, a *confident* conclusion. For we may certainly begin to entertain a favorable opinion of any one who begins to show signs of repentance. We should notice with pleasure any evidence of a change of heart, yea, any indication of uncommon seriousness, however recent it may be. But who can undertake to judge of the character of others, upon a brief acquaintance with their conduct, without liability to mistake? Those natural affections which belong to unregenerate man, may assume the similitude of religion. That heart which is deceitful above all things, may put on appearances so fair and promising, that you can hardly refuse to cherish the idea that the work of grace has been accomplished. Many of those who give pleasing evidence of a new heart, do, after a time, forsake the ways of piety, and show by their conduct, that all the appearances of religion in them have been deceptive. Now if the history of the church from the days of the apostles to the present time proves this to be a matter of fact; ought we not to remember it? If any sinners, by a sudden change in their conversation and conduct, make the impression on our minds that they have been born of the Spirit, ought not the impression to be somewhat qualified by the thought, that their future life may occasion a disappointment of our hopes? Is it the dictate of wisdom — is it according to the will of God, that we should indulge and express as confident a persuasion of the piety of those who have turned their attention to the subject of religion only a few days or hours, as of those who have been long walking in the ways of godliness, and have manifested the Christian temper in seasons of severe trial? Should not the deceitfulness of the heart and the subtlety of the wicked one be subjects of consideration, when we go about to form an opinion of the religious character of those around us? Should they not be subjects of particular instruction in a revival

of religion? When sinners begin to awake to the things which belong to their peace, should they not be apprised of the dangers and delusions to which they are exposed, and taught how to escape them? How did Christ treat this subject during his public ministry? Did he leave his disciples or any of his hearers to suppose, that all those whose feelings were moved under the preaching of the gospel, and who gave visible signs of repentance, were really children of God and heirs of heaven? Read the parable of the sower, in which he portrays the different characters of those who enjoy divine instructions. "Some seed," he says, "fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and *forthwith sprung up, because they had no depth of earth.* And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and *because they had no root*, they withered away." This, he tells us, represents those who hear the word, and at once receive it; yet have not root in themselves, and endure only for a while. As the sudden vegetation of the seed was owing to the very fact, that there was no depth of soil, so the sudden kindling of religious affection and joy, which sometimes appears under the preaching of the gospel, results from the want of deep seriousness and of a thorough work of the Holy Spirit. The parable also represents other classes of hearers who, though more or less affected under the gospel dispensation, are not savingly benefitted; and refers to only one class, in whom the word produces the proper effect.

Again, "the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." The tares came up, and were so mingled with the wheat, and so *like* it, that they could not be safely separated from it before the time of the harvest.

In these and other ways, our Saviour took pains to teach us, how deceitful are the hearts of men, how liable we are to mistake in judging of their character, and how different the final result of the gospel dispensation will be from what present appearances would seem to indicate. And it is incumbent on the ministers of Christ to repeat and explain the instructions and warnings which their Lord gave, and to use them for the welfare of the church.

We ought indeed to desire and pray, that the seed sown may spring up. But is it a matter of no concern with us, whether it spring up like the seed on stony places, for want of a deep soil, or like the seed on good ground? While we are diligent in sowing wheat in our Lord's field, and long to see it covered with an abundant vegetation, shall we consider it no evil, if the enemy should come and sow tares in the field? And though for a time we may not be able to distinguish the tares from the wheat; shall we be unmindful of the evil of having them there?

The plain and solemn admonitions of Christ on this subject should not be neglected. We should listen to them for our own benefit, and proclaim them for the benefit of others. Love to Christ and his church, and faithfulness to the souls of men require this. If the heart is deceitful above all things; if appearances may be fallacious; if there may be strong emotions on the subject of religion, without holiness, — if these things are facts, they ought surely to be declared. I do not say, that such instructions and warnings should be given in every sermon. The truth which pertains to this particular subject, does not constitute the substance of the Christian religion, and it ought not to be dwelt upon as though it did. And it is my apprehension, that some preachers and some writers give comparatively too much attention to the mere *trial* of character, and too little to those essential, moving truths, which contribute directly to the *formation* of character. But because the instructions and cautions to which I refer, do not constitute the great system of divine truth, it does not follow that they constitute no part of it. Nor does it follow that they are of little consequence, or that they can be passed in silence without danger to the interests of religion. They will be found to be specially important to those who have a direct agency in building up the church. For surely they ought to look well to the material to be used in the building, and to distinguish gold, and silver, and precious stones from hay, wood, and stubble. In truth, these instructions are important to every man on earth; because every man is soon to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and his mistaking his own character now and thinking himself a believer

when he is not, will be followed by a woful disappointment and loss. High and sacred are the obligations which bind the ministers of Christ to fidelity in regard to this interesting subject. How can we think without anguish, of meeting poor, deluded sinners at the last day who once thought themselves heirs of heaven, and who will discover their fatal error too late! And how could we bear to hear any of them accost us in such language as this: *Why did you not tell us of the deceitfulness of sin and the wiles of Satan? Why did you suffer us to number ourselves with the disciples of Christ, without pointing out to us the various sources of fatal self-deception to which we were exposed?*

As ministers of Christ we should faithfully declare the counsel of God, and watch for souls as those who must give an account. In the exercise of candor and justice, we ought to hope well of those who show any signs of conversion. And our benevolence should lead us to rejoice over every sinner who, in the judgment of charity, gives evidence of repentance. But hope and joy are not the only feelings we should cherish and manifest toward those who appear to be setting out in the way to heaven. We cannot know for a certainty that they have experienced the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And for us to treat them as though we did know it, would be contrary to the word of God, and would be an injury to them, whether truly converted, or not. Love and faithfulness require us to tell them without reserve, what the truth is in regard to their case. If it is a truth that the heart is deceitful above all things, and that many who have manifested love to Christ and sorrow for sin, have afterwards shown themselves to be strangers to the grace of God; this ought to be declared. If it is a truth, that the best evidence of their regeneration must consist, not so much in present appearances, however pleasing, as in a uniform course of humility, obedience, and usefulness in their subsequent life; that we cannot feel any assurance that they are real Christians, before they have, for some time, exhibited the fruits of the Spirit; this is what we should endeavor to impress upon their minds. If it is a truth that appearances of sudden conversion sometimes arise from the very fact, that there is no thorough

conviction of sin, and no deep impression of divine things; this truth should not be concealed. If it is a truth that, at the judgment day, surprising discoveries will be made as to the characters of those who now profess to be Christians; — that many, once numbered with the followers of Christ, will then be found like the foolish virgins who had no oil with their lamps; this is a truth which we ought faithfully to teach. If the judgment day will show, by many a sorrowful example, that, though a man speak with the tongue of men and of angels; though he understand all mysteries and all knowledge; though he preach the gospel in Christian or in heathen lands, and die as a martyr; if he have not that holy love which is the fruit of the Spirit, he is nothing, and will at last hear the voice of him, whose gospel he preached, saying to him, "*I never knew you;*" this is a truth of inexpressible importance to ministers, and in the expectation of the all-revealing day, they ought most seriously to inculcate it upon each other, and upon themselves. It was under the influence of such a view of the subject, that even Paul, distinguished as he was among the apostles, felt it to be necessary to take great and constant care, lest, after preaching the gospel to others, he himself should be disapproved.

LECTURE XCI.

NATURE OF TRUE VIRTUE, OR HOLINESS. DEFINITION. MORAL LAW THE STANDARD. GENERAL BENEVOLENCE AND REGARD TO PRIVATE GOOD CONSISTENT.

THE nature of that virtue or holiness, which results from the renovating influence of the Spirit, has been noticed more or less in the preceding Lectures; but I propose now to consider it more particularly. *What then is holiness? And how shall it be described?*

Edwards defines it to be, *love to being in general.* This definition of virtue, as intended and explained by the author, is, I doubt not, conformed to truth. But, as a definition, is it exactly and logically correct? To define a thing is, literally, to mark out its limits or bounds. In a more general view, it is to describe those qualities and circumstances of a thing which make it what it is, and which distinguish it from everything else. Suppose, in defining an elephant, you say, he is an *animal.* The proposition is true; but it forms no proper definition of an elephant, as it does not distinguish him from a horse, an eagle, or a whale. Nor is it sufficient to say, he is a quadruped and of great strength. For this is true of other animals. A naturalist, in giving an exact definition of the elephant, would describe those attributes which distinguish him from all other animals. A complete definition must give the genus, that is, the general nature of the thing defined, and the species, that is, the qualities which show what it is in distinction from everything else. Take now the definition of virtue or holiness above noticed. *Virtue is love to being in gene-*

ral. It is doubtless *love;* but to what? *Being in general* comprises all that exists, whether material or spiritual. But the author shows that he did not mean to include all this. He referred only to *intelligent, moral* beings. His definition, then, was too large, including more than was intended. It should have been expressly limited to intelligent, moral beings. Again. We cannot love intelligent, moral beings, except so far as we know them, or have an apprehension of them. And as our knowledge of intelligent beings is very limited, so must our love be. This, too, should be expressed in an exact and complete definition; thus: *virtue is love to intelligent beings, so far as they are apprehended.* But it plainly implies a disposition to love other intelligent beings, who shall hereafter be made known to us. And this, too, might be included in the definition, as it is in the particular explanation which the author gives. Virtue is love to intelligent, moral beings, so far as they are known, implying a disposition to extend our love, as knowledge shall be increased. And this more extensive love will be only a further development of the same affection; this further development resulting, as a natural consequence, from the existence of holy affection in the heart. For example; if we have a benevolent feeling towards a few beings, because they are rational and immortal, and capable of happiness or misery; we shall, for the same reason, have a benevolent feeling towards other beings of like nature. But the virtuous man does not love all intelligent beings in the same manner and degree. He does not love wicked beings with an emotion of the same kind as he loves good beings; the last including *complacency* as well as *benevolenee*, whereas the former is benevolence or good will merely. The love of virtuous, holy beings varies also in degree, according to the degree of excellence or worth possessed by those who are its objects.

All these points are brought into view in the explanation which Edwards gives of his definition of virtue — a definition which, taken by itself, is incomplete, and could not be expected to convey the sense intended.

The distinction of holy love into *benevolence* and *complacency*,

which has just been hinted at, is grounded in the nature of the affection, as it stands related to different objects. If we love those who are not holy, our love will take the form of benevolence, and will act itself out in desires and endeavors that they may be holy and happy. If the objects of our love are created beings, who are now in a degree holy and happy, but who are liable to sin and suffering, in this case our love will operate in the way of both benevolence and complacency.

But how is it in regard to the Supreme Being, who possesses infinite and unchangeable perfection and blessedness? Is he the object of benevolence? Are we to *desire* his holiness and blessedness? We may desire to be partakers of holiness and blessedness ourselves; but is it proper to say, that good men *desire* that God may be perfectly and unchangeably holy and happy? Now we must consider that desire, properly speaking, is excited by the *absence* or *want* of some good; it is an eagerness to obtain something not now possessed. If it relates to another, it is a wish that *he* may obtain some good which he does not now enjoy. But how can we, properly speaking, be said to *desire* to have ourselves, or to desire that another should have, what is already possessed? You may ask whether the *continuance* of the good may not be a proper object of desire? Evidently it may be, if the good is in any way liable to be lost. But suppose there is no possibility of its being lost — suppose the perpetual continuance of it is as absolutely certain as the present possession of it, which is the case with the holiness and happiness of God — how can we then desire it? What place for desire, when all the good contemplated is now in certain and unchangeable possession? If, then, we speak of God as the object of our *benevolence*, it must be in a somewhat indefinite sense, — not that we, strictly speaking, desire his holiness or his happiness. But here is the place for the distinctive exercise of *complacency*. We take *pleasure* in the unbounded moral excellence and blessedness of God. Considered as perfectly holy and happy, he is the object of our perfect *complacency*. He is, indeed, the object of our *desire;* that is, we desire to behold him, to see him as he is, and to enjoy him. This

is a good which we do not enjoy, except in a very low and imperfect degree. The full enjoyment of it is, therefore, to us an object of desire.

But is it not our duty to desire and seek the glory of God, though it is infinite and immutable? Certainly this is our duty. But in what sense? We are not to desire that God may have *more intrinsic excellence and worthiness* than he has. We are not to seek to make any addition to his glorious perfection. What, then, are we to desire and seek? Why, we are to desire and seek to promote what is capable of being promoted, namely, what is called his *declarative glory*. In other words, we are to desire that God's infinite and unchangeable perfections may be more and more acted out, and more and more known, acknowledged and adored by his creatures. And this we shall do in consequence of our love to God; just as we desire that others may esteem and love a parent or friend, towards whom we entertain a sincere affection and esteem. In such a case, we contemplate a good not yet accomplished or enjoyed. None of our fellow-men know and honor God in as high a degree as they are capable of; and some of them not at all. Here, then, is something to be desired and sought. We wish, and labor, and pray, that, through the merciful agency of God, our fellow-men may more fully know his supremely excellent character, and may more duly honor him by a sincere worship and obedience. This is a good which the friends of God will forever desire and seek, both for themselves and for others. It is a good to which neither they nor their fellow-men have as yet attained, and to which they never will attain, in such a measure as to exclude all increase; so that the increasing exercise and display of God's wisdom, power, and goodness will forever be an object of their desire — a desire resulting from a supreme affection towards God and good will to his creatures.

Some excellent writers define holiness to be *disinterested benevolence*. The thing intended is doubtless right. And the expression sets forth the truth as clearly, perhaps, as can be done by any other phrase as brief as this. Still some explanation is

required. The word *disinterested* is sometimes thought to be of nearly the same import with *un*interested. According to this, holiness would be a benevolence which takes no interest in its object, — which would be a contradiction. Others have considered the word *disinterested* as excluding all regard to our own welfare. Whereas it is evident that having no regard to our own welfare would be directly contrary not only to the dictates of our sensitive nature, but to the impulse of grace, and to the requirements of the divine law, and would be as real a fault as having no regard to the welfare of others. But the word is in good use, and, in its common acceptation, signifies the opposite of selfishness. A man is selfish who is devoted wholly or chiefly to his own interest, and is without any just regard to the good of others. To be disinterested, or unselfish, is the opposite of this. A man's benevolence or kindness to his neighbors, is disinterested, if he loves their good for its own sake; if his love fixes upon their welfare as its real object, and I would say, too, as an ultimate object. He is *disinterested*, so far as his affection or kindness towards them is not influenced, directly or indirectly, by a regard to his own private interest. If I bestow a favor upon my neighbors merely for the purpose of securing their friendship and obtaining favors from them in return; or if I do it for the honor or for the pleasure of being benevolent; if I seek the salvation of others for the sake of being saved myself, or for the sake of promoting my own credit or comfort; — in all this I am selfish. I act from interested motives. But may not a man who has true, disinterested love, set a high value upon his own welfare? May he not desire and seek his own honor, profit, and pleasure, especially his own future happiness? Yes, he may do this, and, if he has real goodness, he certainly will do it. And God, who commands us to exercise holy love, often presents before us our temporal, and especially our eternal well being, as a motive to influence us to the performance of our duty. Nor is there any inconsistency in this. For if we are truly virtuous and holy, we shall love our neighbor *as* ourselves; and of course we shall love ourselves *as* we love our neighbor. His good will be as real and

as ultimate an object of our desire as our own, and our own as his. And if at any time we should forget our own good, or should have no present respect to it in our thoughts, we should, if truly virtuous, still love our neighbor and desire his good. So on the other hand, if at any time we should have in our thoughts no conscious regard to our neighbor's good, and should even forget that we had a neighbor; we should still love ourselves, and desire our own happiness. But whether we are aware of it or not, loving our neighbor and seeking his good, will, in fact, promote our own welfare; and it is equally true, that loving ourselves and seeking our own welfare will promote the good of others. If we think of the one or the other of these, it will be a motive to right action. The benefit, especially the future reward, which will result to us from the exercise of benevolence, is a real good, and ought to be so regarded. To set no value upon it would be doing violence both to reason and to virtue. But we should do as great violence to reason and virtue, if we should set no value upon the welfare of others. For their welfare is a real good, as truly as our own; and it should be as really an object of our desire. We have, then, these two coördinate objects of regard — these combined motives — our own welfare and the welfare of others. By the constitution of heaven, these objects and motives are inseparably joined together, and should exert a joint influence upon us. Do you ask which of these is the chief motive or object? I answer, the divine law places them on a level. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." According to the spirit of this precept, neither of these exercises or forms of love can be called inferior, secondary, or subservient to the other. We are no more to make the welfare of our fellow-men inferior and subservient to our own, than we are to make our own welfare inferior and subservient to theirs. The fault of the unholy, selfish man is, that he makes his own private good his only real and ultimate object. When his actions, how benevolent soever they may at first appear to be, are examined and analyzed, it will be seen that they are performed *for his own sake*. If he loves his neighbor, he does not love him *as* himself, but *for* himself. His character is, to act from a

regard to his own interest. His governing principle, the spring of his conduct, is selfishness. He cares little for the welfare of others, except as it does in some way tend to advance his own. And whenever their interest comes in competition with his, he cleaves to his own, and sacrifices or neglects theirs.

After all, the best description which can be given of Christian virtue or holiness is, that it is *a conformity in heart and life to the divine law.* That law is made up of all the moral precepts contained in the Scriptures. But our Saviour has given us a summary of the law in two comprehensive precepts. The first is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. The second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The object of the affection required in the first of these commands, is God himself, who is infinitely excellent and glorious. The measure of it is the full extent of the powers and faculties of our minds. If you ask, why we are to love God in this manner, the answer is, because he is possessed of unlimited perfection, and is therefore worthy of our supreme love. Why do we love any intelligent being? Because he possesses what deserves our love, that is, real worth or excellence of character, either intellectual or moral, or both. And it is certainly reasonable that our love to any one should be in proportion to his excellence. If we ought to have a degree of love towards an intelligent being, because he has some degree of excellence; we ought to love God in the highest degree, that is, supremely, because he is supremely excellent. This is the reason why holy beings love God with all their heart, and soul, and mind. His supreme excellence is the objective ground or motive of their love. If it is otherwise — if we love God merely for the favors he bestows upon us — merely because he promotes or because we hope he will promote our interests; then our love does not fix upon God himself, but upon his favors; and in reality it is nothing more than self-love.

But may we not love God for his *favors?* Does not the Psalmist say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my prayer;" and the Apostle — "We love him, because he first loved us?"

In regard to this, it is obvious that the favors God bestows, especially the blessings of redemption, show him to be infinitely excellent and lovely; they manifest the perfection of his character. God can never be the real object of our love, that is, our love can never flow forth towards him, unless we, in some measure, see him to be what he is, an infinitely excellent being. He must be manifested to us. And if we have a heart to love him, the more clearly he is manifested to us, the more will our love be excited. If an affectionate child receives a precious gift from his father, he sees in it the kindness of his father's heart. The gift brings to view the goodness of the giver; and the more excellent the gift, the more excellent it makes his character appear. He holds the gift itself in high esteem; but he esteems and loves the *giver* far more. The gift is more dear to him, because of the giver; and the giver becomes still more dear to him because of the gift. It is on this principle, that Christians love God on account of his favors. They primarily and essentially love God himself — love him for his own supreme excellence and goodness, which has in some measure been made known to them. And as they love God himself, on account of his own excellent and amiable character, they will love him the more, when his character is more clearly manifested to them by the precious gifts he bestows. The fault of those who followed Christ for the loaves, was not that they set a proper value upon the gift he bestowed, but that they valued it merely on its own account — valued it in a selfish manner; "not because they saw the miracle," which evinced the divine character of Christ, "but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled," and because they hoped to be filled again. They cared for nothing, but the temporal favor. A gift has a two-fold value; its own intrinsic value, and its value as an expression of the goodness of a beloved friend. Now the gifts of God are of great value in themselves. How precious are the favors he bestows upon us in his common providence! How much more precious are the gifts of his mercy — the spiritual blessings which come to us through the mediation of Christ! How great the value which we ought to set upon these various gifts of God, considered in

themselves! But they have a still higher value, when we consider them as manifestations of the wonderful and glorious goodness of God. And thus our admiring gratitude and love will, in a higher and higher degree, be kindled towards our heavenly Father and our Redeemer by means of those numberless and precious favors which display him before us, as rich in mercy, and exalted and glorious in all his perfections. We love him *as* he is revealed to us, and *because* he is revealed to us by his gifts. And if the love which is kindled in our hearts towards God, corresponds, so far as our capacity admits, with his manifested excellence, — this is the love which is required by the first and great commandment. This is holiness. And if this holy love is not defective in degree, and is free from the mixture of opposite affections, then our holiness is complete.

If we have a heart thus to love God, we shall of course conform to the second comprehensive command, and shall love our neighbors as ourselves. This command requires, that we should exercise a cordial affection towards our fellow-creatures; that we should set a high value upon them as rational and immortal beings; that we should desire and seek their well-being, present and future, as sincerely as we do our own; that we should be as unwilling to injure them as we are to injure ourselves; that we should rejoice with them when they rejoice, and weep with them, when they weep; in short, that, by a benevolent sympathy, we should put ourselves in their place, and should regard them as a part of ourselves, and their interest as part of our own. The affection required is sincere, impartial, active, and enduring. Where it exists, it prompts to the discharge of all the relative and social duties. "He that loveth another," says the Apostle, "hath fulfilled the law;" that is, the law respecting our fellow creatures. "For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

I know not that any language can set forth the nature of true virtue more clearly, than these two comprehensive precepts. And nothing can be plainer than the falsity of the theory, which makes self-love the ground of all holy exercises, or which asserts that a regard to our own personal good is the spring or motive of all that we do for the good of others. According to this theory, which is the theory of Paley and others, we are to love God and obey his commands *for the sake of our own happiness*. Whereas in truth we are to love God primarily and chiefly for his own infinite perfection. We are to regard him as being *himself* the worthy object of our supreme affection. And as to our fellow men, — we are no more to love them for the sake of our own happiness, than we are to love ourselves for the sake of their happiness. In a proper sense, we are to do both. By promoting our own real good, we are to promote the good of others. And by promoting their good, we are to promote our own. Their good and our own, which God has joined in close union, should both be objects of our desire, and they should have a mutual influence, each having an increased value in our esteem, and an increased efficacy as a motive, on account of the other. I repeat it, that if we are conformed to the divine law, there will be in our moral exercises no more ultimate reference to our own happiness, than to the happiness of others. If our own happiness is for a time, absent from our thoughts, and so is not an object of our present regard, we shall not, on that account, have less regard to the happiness of others. And if their happiness is for a time absent from our thoughts, we surely shall not, on that account, cease to desire our own happiness. In our thoughts and feelings there is often a reference, and it may be a just and impartial reference, to our own welfare. But the nature of the mind, if sanctified, does not either require or admit, that this should always be the case; inasmuch as our own welfare cannot be always present to our thoughts. But if you say, that whenever a holy being thinks of his own happiness, he will and must have a suitable regard to it; this is admitted. His very nature as an intelligent and sensitive being, must lead him to desire his own happiness. And his holiness will lead him

to desire it justly. Nor is there any danger of his setting an excessive or disproportionate value upon his own true, spiritual and eternal happiness? The general fault of mankind is that they do not desire their own real good, do not seek their own salvation, *as they ought*. The thoughtless and impenitent do not desire and seek it at all. But if while we earnestly desire and seek our own real good, we have a heart sincerely to desire and seek the good of others; this is Christian virtue. This is obedience to the divine precept, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Love thyself with a just and holy love; and love thy neighbor in like manner. Let thy love to thyself, if that love is right, be the pattern of thy love to others.

It is however manifest, that the command to love our fellow creatures as ourselves does by no means require, that we should give the same degree of *attention* to their interests, temporal or eternal, as to our own. By the ordering of God's providence, as well as by the authority of his word, our own interests are committed specially to our care; not because they are in reality more important, or should be *regarded* by us as more important, than the interests of others; but because, in this way, both our own interests, and those of others, can be best promoted. With our limited capacities, we can give attention to only a few things at the same time, and can never give attention to more than a very small part of the interests of the intelligent creation. And if, because we love our fellow creatures as ourselves, we should undertake to bestow the same care and labor upon their concerns, as upon our own, we should fail in regard to both, and should really be guilty of an officious and unlawful meddling with what belongs appropriately to others. Neither the divine law nor divine providence involves us in any such mistake or difficulty as this. The law does indeed require a cordial, impartial, and enlarged affection to our fellow men, and persevering endeavors to do them good. But the same law requires us, first of all, to look well to our own souls and to take care of our own welfare, — to repent, to believe and obey for ourselves, — a work which no one can do for us. And here we see the wisdom, the harmony, the goodness

of the divine economy. For it is clear that this special attention to our own welfare will contribute most to the amount of that general welfare which we are required to seek, and which it is the object of the divine benevolence to secure. We thus arrive at the pleasing conclusion, that the most expansive general benevolence not only consists with private, individual good, but certainly promotes it; and that it not only consists with our private, individual duties, but directly and certainly leads us to discharge them with the utmost diligence and fidelity.

LECTURE XCII.

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE. IMPORTANCE OF THE DUTY.

THAT moral excellence or holiness, which results from the renovating influence of the Spirit in the heart, and which we have dwelt upon in previous Lectures, is *one simple principle*. It has a real, spiritual unity. But it is developed in all the particular virtues and graces of the Christian character. These are all branches of holiness. How multiplied soever they may be, and how plainly soever they may be distinguishable from each other, they all have the same nature; they come from the same source; and they are only the proper development of the same general principle, the same right affection in the renewed heart.

It might be well for us to go into a full consideration of each of these branches of Christian virtue. But we shall confine our attention particularly to two principal ones, namely, *repentance* and *faith*.

In the common version of the Scriptures, the two Greek words, μετανοέω and μεταμέλομαι, are both translated, to *repent*. But it is evident, as Dr. Campbell and others have shown, that these words, in their current use in the New Testament, have very different senses. The first signifies *a change of mind, a change of one's views, affections and conduct in regard to the things of religion*. It denotes a turning from sin to holiness. In Acts 8: 22, this idea of turning from sin seems in the original to be directly indicated. "Repent *of* this thy wickedness," ἀπὸ, literally, *from* this thy wickedness, that is, *penitently turn from*

it. This I apprehend to be the real import of the word, μετανοέω, whenever it is used to point out the duty required of the sinner. And so it denotes the same as is denoted in the various passages, which speak of sinners as turning from their wicked ways, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, etc.

The other word, μεταμέλομαι, generally denotes *an anxious, painful feeling, which arises in the mind in view of transgression* — a distressing sense of guilt — the acting of conscience reproaching the sinner for having committed wickedness, and pointing him to a future retribution. It is the feeling of *remorse;* and it was strikingly exemplified in the case of Judas, who repented of his treachery, that is, had a painful sense of remorse, and then, instead of turning from his ungrateful and wicked conduct, filled up the measure of his guilt by committing the heinous sin of self-murder.

One who has true, saving repentance, sees the evil of sin — sees it truly, though not perfectly. He has not a clear view of every sin which he has committed, nor of all the evil which belongs to any one sin. But his eyes are opened, at least opening; and he beholds, or rather begins to behold, the hatefulness and malignity of sin. In his view, sin is, as the Apostle expresses it, *exceedingly sinful*, and deserves to be abhorred by all rational beings. His eye is chiefly fixed, not upon the punishment of sin, dreadful as he considers it to be, but upon its own vile and odious nature. If at any time he does not think of the punishment threatened, or if he hopes to be saved from it, he still sees sin to be altogether criminal and vile, hateful and ill-deserving; and all its criminality and vileness and hatefulness and ill-desert he ascribes to himself. It is *he* that is the criminal. He is convinced that there is nothing on earth or in hell worse than *to be a sinner.* Instead of excusing himself, or in any way palliating his guilt, he is ashamed and confounded before God, and abhors himself, saying, with Job, "behold I am vile."

Without a conviction of the real, intrinsic evil of sin, no one truly repents. A person will hardly give up and avoid that which is desirable and lovely in his view. Or if for any reason he gives

it up in his visible conduct, he will not give it up in the affections of his heart; and his giving it up visibly will be contrary to his inclinations, and from an unwelcome necessity. His change is external, and reaches not the predominant state of his mind.

The penitent sinner has some true knowledge of God. His repentance is "repentance *towards* God." His relation to God is far more important than any of the relations he sustains to other beings. And he can never adequately conceive how inexcusable and ill-deserving he is, unless he considers himself as standing in this highest of all relations. He who repents, sees God to be infinitely excellent; and the idea of his having sinned against so good and so glorious a Being does at times so engross his attention, that he can scarcely think of anything else; and he says, with penitent David, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight." And it is this view of his sins, not exclusively of other views, but more than any other, which lays him low in self-abasement, and produces a conviction in his inmost soul, that his condemnation would be just. Now this state of mind directly involves what is appropriately called *repentance*, that is, *turning from sin*. For how can a man continue to sin against a Being who in his view possesses infinite goodness as well as infinite power, — who is altogether lovely, and whom he has already begun to love with all his heart? As he entertains some right apprehensions of the glorious character of God, he is of course sensible of the reasonableness and goodness of the moral law. For nothing can be more evident, than that the justice or equity of the law which calls for the supreme love of rational creatures, depends primarily on the character of him who is set before them as the object of love. If then God is such a Being, as the Scriptures represent him to be, he is worthy of all the love, the worship and the obedience which his law demands. Hence follows the great evil of transgression, and the justice of the punishment threatened. We are by no means able to comprehend the whole demerit of sin; but if we have the Holy Spirit to enlighten and sanctify us, we shall tremblingly and submissively acknowledge, that God is righteous both in giving the law and in

executing its penalty. No complaint of the undue severity of that penalty will come from our lips, or arise in our hearts. We shall have a conviction, which will not be so much a matter of reasoning, as of a direct, spiritual discernment, that the punishment which God has appointed, is no more than commensurate with the evil of sin, and no more than the principles of a perfect moral government render necessary. And so our mouth will be stopped, and we shall no more reply against God.

Without some conviction of this kind, there can be no real repentance. If any one really thinks that the law requires too much, or that its penalty is too severe, he sides with rebels; and whatever he may do in the way of outward reform, he does it with a heart of enmity. Enmity against God may admit of the sinner's doing many seemingly good actions for the sake of escaping misery, but it will not admit of his truly turning from sin. Enmity is itself sin — sin in its worst form; and all other sins are enfolded in its bosom. He then, who retains a heart of enmity, retains sin unsubdued and enthroned.

The repenting sinner sees the beauty of holiness and is attracted by it. He turns to holiness because he loves it. I might say, loving holiness is itself turning to holiness. For turning to holiness is a work of the heart. And how can the heart turn to an object except by loving it? And we know that a man never truly loves anything unless it has loveliness and beauty in his eyes. Some real perception of the beauty of holiness is involved in all true conviction of the evil of sin. For the same spiritual eye which sees the deformity and hatefulness of sin, sees the beauty and excellence of holiness; and the same heart which hates sin, loves holiness. The two things are only the acting out of the same disposition in two directions.

Again, I remark, that although the original word, *μετάνοια*, rendered repentance, does not directly indicate sorrow, still sorrow must be considered either as involved in the nature of repentance, or as a circumstance uniformly attendant upon it. Some have entertained the strange opinion, that a good man should not be sorry for sin, because God will overrule it for good.

But this is a speculation which is totally contrary to reason, experience, and the word of God. How often do the Scriptures call upon men to mourn and weep for their sins! And how futile is every attempt to get rid of the plain import of the texts which relate to the subject. On the principle which I oppose, David was very faulty, because he was so grieved for his own sins, and because rivers of water ran down his eyes on account of the sins of others. And if we should not mourn and weep on account of our sins, because they will be overruled for the glory of God; for the same reason we should not mourn and weep on account of any calamity or suffering which may befal us or our fellow-creatures, and should strive to acquire an utter insensibility and callousness of feeling. And then the question arises, why Jesus directed the women who followed him on his way to Calvary weeping, to weep not for him, but for themselves and their children, on account of the evils which were soon to overwhelm them, — inasmuch as those evils would be to the glory of a just and holy God? And why did Jesus weep at the grave of Lazarus? You say, he wept from sympathy with his weeping friends. But why did he sympathize with them? Why did he not rather reprove them for the sorrow they felt, and tell them that their mourning was all wrong, inasmuch as the event which had taken place would be overruled for the glory of God? And why did the Prophet speak of it as a prominent effect of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they should look on him whom they had pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness for him as one is in bitterness for his first born? This is the case now with all penitent sinners. But why this bitterness of sorrow, when their sin against the blessed Saviour would, by the almighty providence of God, be made the occasion of good? The opinion now before us, if carried out in practice, would end in the most unfeeling stoicism.

Under the influence of pure Christianity, the heart becomes soft and tender, and men have godly sorrow for their sins in proportion to their piety, — their sorrow being at the same time the means of increasing their piety. The Apostle does not say that

godly sorrow *is repentance*, but that it *worketh* repentance. Sorrow for sin promotes *repentance*, that is, a more complete turning from sin, and greater watchfulness against it. If children have a dutiful temper, they will, on reflection, be heartily sorry for their disobedience to their father, and their sorrow will operate as a safeguard against a repetition of the offence.

Do not those who advocate the notion which I have endeavored to confute, overlook a very plain and important distinction? *Sin* belongs to *man*. He who commits it, transgresses a perfect law, and abuses the goodness of the Lawgiver. What he does is totally wrong. His motive is wrong. The natural tendency of his conduct is wrong. Sin, whether existing in the heart, or in outward act, has no mixture of good. If the sinner comes to a right mind, he views the subject in this light. He condemns what he has done, and himself as the doer. He is heartily grieved and sorry, that he has abused infinite goodness — that he has dishonored him who deserves everlasting honor and praise — that he has treated his divine Friend and Benefactor with ingratitude. He calls to mind the multitude of his transgressions with their various aggravations, and his heart becomes broken and contrite. He mourns for the evil he has done, and resolves to sin no more. But while he thus condemns sin and mourns for it, he views the government of God with approbation and delight. It gives him joy that the evil which he and others have done, or attempted to do, will be overruled for the glory of God — that his inexcusable wickedness will be made the occasion of good. These two things are plainly and entirely distinct from each other; and the enlightened penitent so regards them, and has correspondent feelings. He disapproves and abhors the evil which he has done, but approves and loves what God does. He has sorrow for the evil, and joy for the good. He grieves bitterly that he has acted so basely as to sin against God. But he is glad that God is over all, and will glorify himself and do good to his holy kingdom by means of that which is, in itself, so great an evil. To sum up the whole in few words, the penitent looks upon sin with abhorrence and grief, but upon the holy agency of God with acquies-

cence and joy. And he never regards sin as a less evil, or as less a reason for godly sorrow, because God will overrule it for good; nor does he, on the other hand, feel less joy in the good, because God, in his sovereign providence, accomplishes it by means of evil.

It will be easy for a man, whose habits of thinking are derived from the Scriptures, to keep his mind free from all puzzling speculations on this subject by adverting to the distinction above suggested, regarding the evil of sin on the one side, and the holy providence of God on the other, as they are in their own nature. If his renewed heart acts itself out naturally and freely towards these different objects, all will be right.

I have thus endeavored to show what are the principal attributes and circumstances of repentance. But it must be kept in mind, that it is one and the same holy principle, manifesting itself in different ways, according to the different objects which are contemplated. And it is important to remark, that the change which constitutes repentance, is a *gradual* change. It has a beginning a progress, and a completion. The change in its own nature, appertains to all moral objects and relations. But clearly to develop itself in regard to all, is a work of time. A penitent immediately begins to forsake his evil ways. Whatever wrong practice he particularly considers, he begins to put away, and whatever duty comes clearly before his mind, he begins to perform. But the work is not suddenly brought to perfection. From time to time the penitent has new views of God and his law, of himself and his fellow creatures. These objects do in fact continue to present themselves before him under new aspects, and with additional degrees of clearness, and his affections, his purposes, and his conduct are brought under a corresponding influence. He abandons one sinful practice and subdues one sinful disposition after another, and does it more and more decidedly. With God's holy and spiritual law in view, he from time to time discovers evils in his heart and life, which before lay concealed, and modes of holy and benevolent action not before noticed; in consequence of which, he makes further advances in the work of repentance. For the

most part, the repenting sinner begins his new life feebly, and with many defects. And he is afterwards subject to backsliding, and may go forward in his journey to heaven very slowly. In every period of his spiritual life, his repentance is imperfect. While it is the case that a great part of his thoughts, desires and purposes fail of being conformed to the divine law, and while a great part of his actions, though in man's view unexceptionable, are performed from selfish motives, it is clear that he has made but little progress in the real business of repentance. And it is a matter of astonishment, that so many persons, who have been repenting for years, have still but just begun the work; that after they have been changing their mind so long, they have yet changed so little; and that so many visible faults and so many inward, spiritual disorders still cleave to them. Hence it appears, that repentance continues to be the duty of Christians through the whole course of their probation, inasmuch as they are, at every period of life, more or less subject to moral evil. They have *real* holiness, but not complete holiness. They have begun the work of repentance, but have not finished it. But it is as evidently their duty to finish the work, as to begin it — to turn from sin wholly, as to turn at all. Such is their bounden duty. And if after they have known the blessedness of returning to God, and have tasted the joys of salvation, they do in any respect still neglect the duty of repentance, and continue in sin; what sacred obligations do they violate! Of what ingratitude and perverseness are they guilty! And what strange insensibility do they show to the attractions of infinite beauty and goodness! The sins which remain in Christians, and which occasion a continual and often painful conflict with themselves, and which require the daily exercise of repentance even to the end of their life, furnish a stronger proof of the deep, inbred depravity of the heart, than any sins which occur in an unregenerate state.

The duty of repentance, being so reasonable and indispensable, and being so frequently and solemnly inculcated by prophets and apostles, and by Christ himself, ought to be commenced by sinners without delay, and to be continued by Christians with unceas-

ing earnestness, throughout this state of trial. The command of the ascended Saviour to his imperfect, backsliding people, is — "be zealous and repent." In what way can we exercise zeal and resolution so justly and so laudably, as in the work of ridding ourselves of the abominable thing which God hates — the work of getting cured of that loathsome, fatal disease which has seized upon our souls, and which must be cured, before we can be admitted to the presence of Christ in heaven!

I have said that Christians, as well as unsanctified sinners, have much to do in the work of repentance. And such is the practical importance of this view of the subject, that I cannot close without attempting to impress it more fully upon the minds of those who are preparing for the holy office of the ministry. As the office with which you are to be invested is one of uncommon sanctity, uncommon purity and excellence of character will be justly expected of you. And as you possess the same fallen nature with others, you must attain to the requisite excellence by the same process, that is, by the continual exercise of repentance. This duty is specially incumbent on persons in your circumstances, because sin, existing in *you*, must evidently be attended with fearful aggravations. Of this you cannot doubt, if you consider in what sacred studies you are daily employed, and how many advantages your situation affords for growth in grace. Happy will you be, if you may have a just and adequate conviction of the necessity of thorough evangelical repentance, and correspondent resolution and perseverance in discharging the momentous duty. It is a duty which returns upon us every day, because every day we have sin dwelling in us; and so it will doubtless be, while life lasts. This, I think, must be the clear conviction of every Christian who faithfully examines himself, and compares his heart and life with the perfect standard of holiness. And he must consequently feel, that he is continually urged by the most powerful motives to the humiliating, but indispensable work of repentance.

Is it not, then, a great fault of Christians generally, and may it not be the fault of many theological students and many ministers

of the gospel, that they do not, with suitable diligence, pursue the work of repentance? They have begun it, but they do not urge it on to its full accomplishment as they ought; and, consequently, they do not make due advances in the divine life, and are so far from being complete in all the will of God. How different would it now be with us, had we, from the moment when, as we trust, the Spirit of God first visited our hearts, diligently prosecuted the work of repentance! Let us be diligent in the work for the time to come, making it a part of our daily business, as the followers of Christ. If we find pride or ambition, envy or ill will, covetousness or selfishness, or any other form of sinful affection working within us, we see here what is to be done. We must forthwith *repent;* that is, we must put away the sin, whatever it is, and vigilantly guard against its regaining any influence over us. We must be resolute in this indispensable work, and, relying on the help of God, must never give it over, whatever discouragements may come in our way. How often soever we may be foiled or driven back, we have no cause to be disheartened, for we follow a powerful and glorious Leader, who has conquered sin for us, and who will make us partakers of his victory, if we faithfully adhere to him. We have, I say, no cause to be disheartened; for there is no corrupt disposition so confirmed by use, no law of sin in our minds so powerful, that it cannot, through the grace of Christ, be effectually overcome. But, in order to our success, we must pursue the work unceasingly; just as the Israelites were commanded unceasingly to fight against the Canaanites in the land of promise, till they were utterly destroyed. Whenever we enter on the business of self-inquiry, we find ourselves guilty of some manifest transgressions of the law, or some neglects of duty. Here is the place where repentance should come in. We should immediately reform what is amiss; should make haste and delay not to keep God's commandments. When we appear in the house of God, when we read his word, and call upon his name, and when we engage in the duties of our calling — yes, everywhere and continually, we should have a penitent heart and a contrite spirit. Nothing should be suffered to turn us aside from this all-

important work. It would be far better for us to neglect our bodily health, or our intellectual improvement — better to forego any worldly profit or pleasure, than to neglect the work of putting away the evil that dwells in us and curing the diseases of our souls. This work is of the highest moment. The Lord Jesus, after he ascended on high, stooped down from his throne in the heavens to say to his imperfect, erring followers — "Be zealous, and repent." Here is an exercise of zeal which, though incomparably important, is little thought of. We manifest zeal in our worldly pursuits; but where is our zeal in our pursuit of holiness, in correcting what is amiss, and in amending our character as Christians? And yet we must have zeal and earnestness, or the work will not be done. Did we but attend rightly to this high command of our Lord, "Be zealous and repent," looking to him for grace to help in time of need, we should no longer be found retrograde or stationary in our spiritual course. We should no longer show, at the end of the month or year, the same faults and blemishes as at the beginning — the same faults unchecked, undiminished, and sometimes even growing upon us. Instead of this, we should be constantly making advancement in godliness. Forgetting the things behind, we should press on towards perfection. Noxious weeds, now growing in our garden, would be plucked up, and useful vegetables would flourish in their place. Plants, formerly neglected, would be cultivated; and trees, once barren, would bear fruit. And why is it that we are not in this happy state? Why have we made so little progress? Why this want of growth and fruitfulness? Why have we so little conformity to Christ, and why do our prayers obtain so small a measure of spiritual good for ourselves and for others? It will be easy for us to account for these evils, if we consider how little we have done in the momentous duty of repentance.

LECTURE XCIII.

FAITH. WHY NOT MORE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD? FAITH IN A GENERAL SENSE. WHAT IS FAITH IN CHRIST? ENJOINED AS THE DUTY OF ALL SINNERS.

ALTHOUGH the language of Scripture respecting faith seems to be very intelligible, there are few subjects on which more obscure and erroneous opinions have been entertained. This deplorable fact results from various causes.

1. *The objects of faith are remote from the province of the senses.* Our attention, from the beginning of life, is directed to the present world. We look at the things which are seen. Those, therefore, who would get right views of faith, are under the necessity of casting off the dominion of their early habits; of breaking away from the enchantments of sense, and turning the current of their thoughts and feelings into a new channel. All experience shows this to be a work of difficult accomplishment.

2. Another thing which renders it difficult to obtain clear and satisfactory views of faith, is, that *the language which describes it has been so often spoken and heard without correspondent conceptions or feelings.* This custom of speaking and hearing the words of divine truth, without the conceptions which those words ought to kindle within us, creates a new difficulty. For whenever those words are repeated, the mind is apt to lie in the same listless state as before. It is no easy matter to feel a lively interest in a subject which has often passed before us without exciting our attention.

3. *Such is the nature of faith, that it cannot be rightly apprehended, without being experienced and felt.* Christian faith, instead of consisting chiefly in a speculative discernment of external objects, is, in a great measure, a matter of affection. But how can an affection be known, except by those who have been the subjects of it? And as to believers themselves, — faith exists in them in so low a degree, that they are by no means free from the same difficulty. For how can they form adequate conceptions of that which operates in their own minds so feebly and so inconstantly?

4. *Right apprehensions of faith are prevented, by the prevalence of corrupt dispositions in the heart.* These dispositions render us blind to spiritual, holy objects. They not only prevent us from exercising faith, but make us unwilling to perceive what it is, because such perception would lead to self-reproach and self-condemnation. In this, as in other cases, "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned." And, so far as sinful affections prevail in Christians, they hinder spiritual discernment as really as in the unrenewed.

Such considerations as these may help us to account for the obscure and erroneous views which are commonly entertained of the nature of faith, and for the difficulty of making it well understood.

There is no part of the holy Scriptures which so particularly illustrates the nature and influence of faith, as the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer begins with a brief description of faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Ὑπόστασις literally signifies what stands under, as a basis or support. It is here used metaphorically, and signifies *firm trust*, or *confidence*, on which the mind rests, and which gives to spiritual, invisible objects a *substance* and *reality*, as though they were present. Faith is also the "evidence of things not seen." Its objects have not the evidence of sense. But they have an evidence of another

and higher kind. *Ἔλεγχος*, rendered evidence, seems here to denote the *effect* of evidence, or demonstration. The word of God, who cannot lie, produces in the mind of the believer a *perfect persuasion* of the truth and certainty of those invisible things which are revealed in Scripture. Through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the Christian has within himself *satisfactory evidence*, a *demonstration*, of the reality and importance of things not seen. All doubt is removed from his mind, and he knows that whatever God has declared is true, and that whatever he has promised will be accomplished.

The faith of which the sacred writer here speaks, respects not only the future good which God has promised, and the future evil he has threatened, but all other invisible things which he has made known to us. The very first instance of faith which the writer mentions, relates to past events. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were made, *by the word of God*." We are convinced and satisfied that the worlds were thus made, because God has so informed us.

The ultimate foundation of faith is the absolute perfection of God. A Being who is infinitely intelligent, and holy, and good, cannot deceive. Whatever he declares must be true. In the exercise of faith we fix our thoughts upon such a Being, and have confidence in the truth of all his communications to us. In this general view, faith relates as obviously to the manifestations which God makes in his works, as to the declarations of his word. We believe those manifestations to be in perfect agreement with the truth. If the heavens and the earth declare that God is glorious, we have confidence that he is so. If his dispensation towards us manifest *goodness*, we believe that he is good. We have a full persuasion, that a Being possessed of infinite moral excellence will no more deceive us by the visible operations of his hand, or by the characters which he inscribes on his works, than by the words which he speaks.

See here how sure is the ultimate ground of our faith. We cannot have entire confidence in the opinion or the testimony of *man;* because man may be mistaken, or may deceive. Nor can we

have entire confidence in the deductions of human reason; because those deductions may be fallacious. But the word of the Lord is infallible truth, and so is the foundation of the most certain belief.

In whatever way the word or declaration of God is conveyed to us, our faith in it rests ultimately upon his moral perfection, particularly his veracity. This would evidently be the case, if we ourselves should hear the divine declaration. And why is it not so when the declaration comes to us through the credible testimony of others? For example: we are informed by those who are entitled to full credit, that God uttered a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* We have confidence in the truth of this declaration, because we are satisfied, from the testimony of faithful witnesses, that it came from God; and as it came from God, we are certain it is true. But this is not the case with any declaration which rests ultimately on the authority of man. Let a doctrine be taught by Plato or Newton. The doctrine comes from a man — a man not divinely inspired — a man, not God. How do we treat such a doctrine? Instead of believing it on the mere authority of Plato or Newton, we say, perhaps he was mistaken; and we go about to inquire whether the doctrine is true or not. We examine it; and we receive it or reject it according as we find the evidence for it or against it preponderates. But if we are satisfied that God declares any doctrine, we believe it on the ground of his authority, although there is no other evidence of its truth.

As the word of God is the ultimate ground of religious faith; so it is the *rule* or *measure* of faith. If our faith differs from the word of God, we depart from the rule, and our faith is erroneous. If we believe less than what God reveals, our faith is defective; if more, it has a faulty redundance. If we would have our faith right, we must conform exactly to the word of God, taking care, first, to understand the rule correctly, that our faith may not bend to one side, or the other; secondly, to understand it fully, that our faith may not fall short; thirdly, to restrain the aspirings of reason, and the surmises of curiosity, and to be entirely content with the rule, so that our faith may not overleap its bounds.

It is of material importance to observe, that saving faith implies *cordial affection*, or *a state of the heart correspondent with its objects*. The Scriptures generally point out the external act or the act of the understanding which is required, and that only, upon the reasonable assumption, that such act is always to be attended with suitable feelings. Those who are possessed of an intelligent, moral nature, must understand that right moral affection is to accompany every outward act required, and that, without such affection, no outward act can be acceptable to him who looketh on the heart. When therefore he requires the action, he virtually requires a corresponding state of the heart. God requires us *to call upon his name*. This, taken by itself, is merely an outward act. But in reality this outward act is required as an expression of the heart — the heart being understood not only to agree with the words uttered by the voice, but to prompt them. In like manner, when the Evangelist gives an account of the great faith of the Centurion, he simply relates his words, and visible actions. But every one understands that those words and actions were indicative of correspondent feelings. Unless understood in this manner, the narrative amounts to nothing.

This principle is applicable to every thing which is a matter of obligation; to every thing which relates to man as a moral agent. In every such case, the performance of the duty required includes the action of the whole moral nature of man. God says, "hear my word" — *hear* it. But the duty enjoined is not hearing with the ear merely, the heart being disobedient: but hearing with a right state of mind, and a right conduct. Christ requires his disciples to *receive* the Sacramental bread and wine *in remembrance of him*. But the outward act of *receiving* and the mere exercise of *memory* do not constitute the duty enjoined. The act of receiving and the exercise of memory must be attended with affections suited to the nature of what is commemorated. So every thing of the kind must and will be understood by those who have an intelligent and moral nature.

Let it then be carefully remembered, that whenever faith is spoken of as a moral virtue, it must be understood to imply affec-

tions corresponding with the nature of its objects. Such affections must accompany it, and make a part of it, or it is not the faith which God requires.

And if faith is attended with affections which correspond with its various objects, it changes its particular aspect according as its object is changed. If it relates, as it often does, to what is incomprehensibly great and awful, it is accompanied with reverence and awe; if to what is amiable, it is accompanied with love; if to what is hateful, with abhorrence; if to a future or absent good, with desire; if to an event divinely predicted, with expectation; if to what is injurious, with fear or dread. Thus the believer reveres or loves, desires or expects, abhors or dreads, according to the particular object which he contemplates. And the perfections and works of God may be so presented before him, as to elicit a combination of several devout affections at the same time.

The faith which is peculiar to God's elect, presupposes or implies a spiritual discernment of the reality and excellence of divine things. The unregenerate man may have much speculative knowledge. But there is a kind of knowledge, of which he is destitute. The things of the Spirit he cannot know, "because they are spiritually discerned." This knowledge comes from above. God hides it from the wise and prudent, but reveals it to babes, that is, to those who are of a lowly mind. When Peter declared his faith in Jesus as the Son of God, he manifested a knowledge which was communicated to him by his Father in heaven. And God revealed his Son in Paul, when he was turned from darkness to light. This knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ results from the influence of the Holy Spirit, and is found only in those who believe to the saving of the soul. All true faith is founded upon this spiritual knowledge, this inward perception of the importance and excellence of divine objects. And it is clear, that the faith which rests upon this spiritual discernment, must work by love; for this discernment is a discernment of moral beauty and loveliness; and such a discernment is always attended with complacency.

Evangelical faith, or faith in Christ differs from other acts of faith in regard to its *object*, but not in regard to its *nature*. Faith in general I have represented to be a cordial belief in all the declarations of God's word; a confidence in his veracity; a full and affectionate persuasion of the certainty of those things which God has declared, and *because* he has declared them. Whatever may be the divine testimony, and to whatever object it may relate, faith receives it, and rests upon it. Now the testimony of God which evangelical faith receives, relates to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. The Scriptures make him known in his divine and human perfections, in his offices, his works and his blessings. Faith receives this testimony. Determine what this testimony is, and you determine the peculiar character of evangelical faith. The divine testimony represents that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of men. So faith receives him. The holy Scriptures, which contain the divine testimony, teach, that the Messiah, the Saviour, is God, God over all, possessed of all divine perfections, and that all things were made and are sustained by him. In the exercise of faith we receive him in this high character, and love and adore him, and trust in him, as truly God. The Scriptures declare, that the Son of God humbled himself, and took upon him our nature; that he was born, and lived, and died as a man; that he suffered and died for us; that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; that in order to deliver us from the curse of the law he was made a curse for us; that he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins; that he is able to save to the uttermost; that in him all fulness dwells; that he will guide, protect and save all who trust in him. All this, and whatever else the Scriptures reveal respecting the character, offices and blessings of Christ, evangelical faith receives. Faith is a counterpart to the revealed doctrine respecting the Saviour. It assents to, approves, and embraces the teachings of the divine word. Faith may indeed exist in principle, where the whole range of gospel truth is not actually received, being as yet not known. There may be a *heart* to believe and love whatever shall be re-

vealed and apprehended respecting Christ and his work, although at present the knowledge attained is exceedingly limited. This is the case with a young child that is sanctified, and with a newly converted heathen. They understand but a small portion of the truths taught in the Scriptures. But that which they do understand, they receive with meekness and love; and they have a disposition to receive more, as soon as it shall be apprehended. All parts of gospel truth are harmonious; all are of the same nature. So that intelligently and sincerely to receive and love any part of it, is virtually to receive and love the whole. But in the cases referred to, faith, as a principle in the renewed mind, is imperfectly developed. If you would get a fuller idea of its nature, you must look at it in one who has distinctly contemplated and cordially believed the different parts of divine truth.

Some suppose that true, saving faith consists in believing that Christ died and rose again, and is the Saviour of sinners, whatever may be the particular views entertained of his character and the design of his death. But this must be regarded as a very partial and inadequate idea of faith. When the inspired writers speak of Christ, and his death, and the work he accomplishes as a Saviour, they teach a variety of *definite truths;* and these very truths we are to receive. We must believe in Christ. But who is Christ? What is his character? Is he a mere man? Or is he something more than a man? We must know this, before we can know what kind of faith or trust we should have in him. For surely the manner in which we should regard him, and the trust we should repose in him, if he is a mere man, is very different from what we should do, if he is truly divine. Trusting in *God* is quite a different thing from trusting in *man*—so different, that a dreadful curse is pronounced upon those who put their trust in man, while those are blessed who trust in God. Now as the Scriptures declare Jesus Christ to be God as well as man, and require a correspondent faith in us; it is clear that the faith of those who hold Christ to be merely human, does not meet the demands of the Scriptures. Again; to believe in Christ as a *teacher* merely, does not meet the demands of the Scriptures, as

they teach that he sustains other offices as well as that of a teacher. But if men would really and consistently regard him and have a confidence in him as a teacher, they would receive his instructions respecting other points of his character and work. It is also evident that to believe in Christ merely as an example of virtuous suffering and as a martyr to the cause of truth, is not to have the faith required; because Christ was more than an example, and more than a martyr to the truth. He died the just for the unjust. He shed his blood to make an atonement for sin. True gospel faith accords with this doctrine of Christ's vicarious sufferings, and his atoning blood, and rests upon his all-sufficient sacrifice as the meritorious ground of forgiveness and eternal life.

I might continue these remarks. But I have said enough to illustrate the point I had in view, that is, to show, that our faith is defective so far as it fails of receiving all the instructions of revelation respecting the character and work of Christ and the blessings he confers on believers. If we do truly embrace the whole doctrine of the gospel respecting the Redeemer, with correspondent affections; we then have the faith which most effectually purifies the heart and secures the approbation and blessing of God.

It has been the opinion of some, that it is the nature of true gospel faith, to believe that Christ died for us particularly; that pardon of sin and eternal salvation are actually ours; and that the belief of this belongs to the first act of saving faith.

In order to disentangle this subject, and to place the truth in as clear a light as possible, I offer the following remarks.

First. If real Christians — persons born of the Spirit and united to Christ by a living faith — if such persons believe that Christ died for them in particular, and in a special sense — if they believe that they are pardoned, and that a full salvation is actually theirs; they believe the truth. Persons of this character are really pardoned, and entitled to salvation. The word of God declares them to be so. They have repented and believe, and their sins are blotted out, and they shall be saved. If they have true repentance

and faith, they are pardoned and will be saved, whether they think so, or not. The word of God is infallibly true. If any one, who has the faith which worketh by love, thinks he is not pardoned, he is mistaken. And this is a very supposable case. For it is evident that a man may have faith, and yet for a time may not know that he has it. He may misapprehend the state of his own mind, and may suppose himself an unbeliever, when in reality he is a believer. And on the other hand, a man may think himself a believer, when he is an unbeliever. This last is plainly the more common mistake, and the more likely to occur; because men are generally prone to think too favorably of themselves, rather than too unfavorably.

My second remark is, that as all just and rational belief rests upon evidence of the truth of what is believed; we must have *evidence* that our sins are forgiven, before we can properly *believe* it. Now the Scriptures declare that through the blood of Christ, sinners shall be forgiven, *if they repent and believe.* The Scripture evidence then, that we are forgiven, is no other than evidence that we have repentance and faith. So far as we have evidence of this, we have evidence of our forgiveness. If we have satisfactory evidence of our repentance and faith, we have evidence which ought to be satisfactory, of our forgiveness. If we *know* that we have true, gospel faith, we *know* or may know that our sins are forgiven. But if we are in doubt as to the existence of faith in us, we must be in doubt as to our forgiveness.

My third remark respects the *first act* of *saving faith.* In this a sinner must cordially believe what is true; he must believe either the whole or a part of the truth. It is a truth that God sent his Son to die for sinners. It is a truth that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; that he is divinely glorious, an almighty, all-sufficient Saviour; that he invites us to come to him, poor and miserable as we are, and to receive what he offers, a free, full salvation; and that whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out. The way for our salvation is then prepared. We may be pardoned and saved, if we will receive Christ as he is offered, and trust in him as our chosen Saviour. Here is

truth — truth in various particulars. This in its different parts, and as a whole, is what we are required to believe with the heart, and to act upon. That is, we are to believe that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, and to receive him and trust in him as such. We are to believe that we shall be pardoned, *if we have faith in Christ;* for this is a revealed truth. But is it a truth that any sinner is pardoned, *before* he believes? It is a truth that pardon is provided and offered, and that he may be pardoned on the prescribed condition. But instead of being actually pardoned *while* he remains in unbelief, he is under condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on him. If he believes the whole truth, he will believe this, that is, that he is under condemnation. And if he believes himself pardoned while he is without faith, he believes what is false. But is he not pardoned, *when* he believes, and *as soon* as he believes in Christ? Yes. He is in reality pardoned. But how shall he *know* that he is pardoned? He must know it by first knowing that he is a believer. His persuasion that his sins are forgiven, must rest on the consciousness that he has faith in Christ. If he has faith, and yet is not conscious of it, he cannot reasonably conclude that he is pardoned, though in fact he is so. He must have evidence that he has complied with the conditions of forgiveness, before he can on any just grounds believe that his sins are forgiven. But may not God reveal it to him by an inward operation of the Spirit, that his sins are forgiven? Certainly he may, if he please. But if God reveals this to him, he will reveal it to him *as a truth.* I mean, the thing revealed will be a truth. And if it is a truth that his sins are forgiven, it is a truth that he is a believer. If it should be revealed to him that his sins are forgiven before he has faith, or while he is an unbeliever, the revelation would come from a lying spirit, not from God. For God has already revealed in his word, and settled it forever, that the wrath of God abideth on every unbeliever, and that no sinner except those who believe in Jesus, is pardoned. So that if in any case, the Spirit of God should reveal to a man that he is pardoned, the revelation would presuppose that he is a believer; and thus the whole revelation

taken together, would be a momentous truth, namely, that he believes in Christ, and is pardoned. All God's revelations must be consistent. He may reveal to any *believer*, that all his sins are forgiven, and his name written in heaven. But he cannot reveal to an *unbeliever* that he is pardoned; for this would be contrary to an immutable truth before revealed, that is, that every unbeliever is under condemnation. God may, if he please, reveal to an unbeliever that, through divine grace, he will become a believer, and will thus obtain forgiveness; or that his sins will hereafter be pardoned, because God will give him faith. But to reveal to him that he is pardoned, while he is without faith, would be to contradict the revelation already made. And we are not at liberty to suppose that such a revelation may be made in the way of exception to what is ordinarily true; for the declaration of God's word that no one who is without faith can be pardoned, and that every unbeliever is under divine wrath, is grounded on the unchangeable perfections of God and on the nature of the case. No exception can be supposed.

There is another inquiry to which I would here direct your attention; namely, whether believing in Christ is to be considered as merely an exercise of holiness, and whether it is required for the same purpose and in the same way with any other exercise of holiness. If one who is convinced of sin inquires, what he shall do to be saved, is it as just and proper to direct him to love his neighbor, or to keep the Sabbath, or to do anything else that is right, as it is to direct him to believe in Christ? And was believing in Christ required so specially and prominently at the beginning of the gospel dispensation, on account of the prevalence of Judaism or Paganism, or any other local or temporary circumstances?

Reply. Believing in Christ is undoubtedly an exercise of holiness, and is required because it is right. Sinners are as really under obligation to do everything else that is right, as they are to believe in Christ. In the first days of Christianity, believing in Christ and openly acknowledging him was a test of character of special importance, and was so regarded by the apostles. But if

we should stop here, we should overlook what is peculiar to the gospel. Believing in Christ is represented as a *special* duty. Christians are designated as *believers in Christ.* It is true, they are also designated as those who obey the divine law. But believing in Christ is made a *special* designation. See how the Apostle John speaks of the people of God. "To as many as *received him*, (Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe on his name.*" He does not say, to them who obeyed the moral law gave he this power. John 6: 29, the people inquired what they should do that they might work the works of God. Jesus did not say, this is the work of God that ye obey the moral law; but "*this* is the work of God, that ye *believe on him whom he hath sent.*" The other is required. But this is what God *specially* requires. And when Christ speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit in his higher operations, he speaks of it as what they who *believe* on him shall receive. He does not say, it shall be given to those who keep the moral law, but to those who *believe* on him. In like manner he said to Martha, "He that *believeth on me*, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth on me, shall never die." And when he speaks again of the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit, he says, "He shall convince the world of sin, *because they believe not on me*," implying that this was the great sin. And he frequently says, that those who do not believe on him shall perish, and shall perish *because* they do not believe; implying that final ruin will come upon sinners under the gospel dispensation, not ultimately because they have transgressed the divine law, but because they do not believe in Christ. And we are taught that salvation does not come to men through acts of obedience to the law, but through *faith in Christ.* If then we should overlook this special importance of faith in Christ, and should only speak of it as a duty required of us in common with all other holy acts, we should overlook an essential feature of the gospel revelation.

And as to the supposition that faith in Christ was made so prominent in the early days of Christianity, merely on account of local or temporary circumstances, — are not men sinners at the

present time, and exposed to the penalty of the law, as much as they were in the time of the apostles? Do they not need a Saviour now, as much as then? And is not the Saviour, and the way of salvation the same? There was then no other name under heaven, whereby man could be saved, but the name of Jesus. *Then*, all fulness dwelt in Christ, and those who possessed any spiritual good, received it of him. And is not all this equally true at the present time? Now if sinners are at all times in the same apostate, ruined state, and have the same need of salvation; and if Christ is the only Saviour; and if all who are saved stand in the same relation to him and are equally dependent on him for spiritual blessings; then surely believing or trusting in him is a duty which is at all times equally important and necessary, and which should at all times be made equally prominent. If a sinner at this day has the conviction of sin which the jailor had, and makes the inquiry which he made; we are to give the same reply as Paul gave. We must not turn him off with a general direction to keep the commandments, to submit to God, or to do what is right; but must present before him the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Saviour, in all his fulness, and exhort him, as a lost sinner, to believe in that Saviour. It is indeed true, that Christ directed the young man who inquired what he should do to inherit eternal life, to keep the commandments, and afterwards to sell all that he had and give to the poor. But he evidently did this for the purpose of detecting the latent covetousness and selfishness of the young man's heart, and convincing him of sin. But when any one *is* convinced of sin, and asks for the way in which he can be saved, we have nothing to do but to repeat and explain to him the direction given by the apostles, and to labor by every Scriptural consideration, to induce him to comply with it. You know how this subject was treated by the Saviour himself, in his final commission to his apostles, in which he made salvation to depend not upon keeping the commandments, but upon *believing*. There was nothing temporary in this, for it was to be the same in all ages; nothing local, for it was to be the same in all the world.

LECTURE XCIV.

HOW FAR THE ACT OF FAITH CAN BE DESCRIBED? ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCE.

WHILE attentively considering the subject of faith, we are struck with the fact, that no particular analysis or explanation of the act of believing in Christ is found in the Scriptures. Christ and the apostles often speak of faith, as indispensable to salvation; and it might have been thought that they would show us by an exact description, what that important exercise of the mind is. But where do they do this? Many a person has anxiously searched the Scriptures to find such a description of the act of saving faith, so that they might ascertain whether he has been the subject of it, or might know how to put it forth. But no such exact description can be found. And on careful inquiry you will be convinced, that faith in Christ, *as an act* or *state of the mind*, cannot be clearly apprehended, except by those in whom it exists. It can be adequately known only by *consciousness*, that is, *by being experienced or felt.* And this being the case, must we not conclude that an exact analysis or description of the act of believing in Christ is either unnecessary, or that, from the very nature of the case, it is impossible? I will only add, that, how earnestly soever unbelievers may endeavor to conceive what faith in Christ is, if they become true believers, they always find faith to be very different from their previous idea of it.

The same principle holds in regard to other religious exercises. The sacred writers do not undertake to give an exact description

of the act of love to God or love to our neighbor, or the act of repentance, or forgiveness of enemies. They require these and other right acts of the mind, and use the words suited to express them. But the acts themselves they nowhere particularly describe. And whatever description might be given of these exercises or states of mind, no one could rightly conceive what they are, without being the subject of them. And is not this the case with all the affections, dispositions, and acts of the mind? No one of these can ever be known by us, except as it takes place within us. What idea could we have of pity and love, joy and sorrow, if we had never felt them in our hearts?

But in regard to faith in Christ, there is a kind of description or explanation which we may give of it, by pointing out its object, together with the circumstances in which it takes place, and the effects which flow from it; or by suggesting some apt analogies. The sacred writers treat the subject in each of these ways. And as Christian teachers, we are to conform to their example. Suppose then you wish to describe faith in Christ to attentive hearers, so that they may be under advantages to exercise it, or to judge whether they possess it. What shall you do? I answer, first, clearly set forth the *object* of faith, Christ the Son of God, Christ crucified, Christ exalted and glorified, able and willing to save. Exhibit him as infinitely wise, powerful and good, as faithful and all-sufficient, the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. Thus set forth the Lord Jesus Christ as the proper object of faith, worthy of the most affectionate and entire trust and confidence. Who can fail of seeing that cordial trust in such a Saviour is a duty and a privilege? Secondly. Describe the circumstances in which faith in Christ takes place. We are all sinners — all gone astray — utterly undone and helpless — deserving the threatened punishment. How powerfully do these circumstances urge us to apply to the proffered Saviour! "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Finding ourselves in this condition, we comply with his merciful invitation, and come to him for rest. No one believes in Christ as a Saviour, unless he is convinced that he is

lost, and needs a Saviour. In order to persuade men thus to seek rest, you must endeavor to impress them with their wretched condition as sinners. Again. Describe the blessings which are sought and secured by believing, that is, the deliverance of the soul from sin and its merited punishment, and complete restoration to the image and favor of God. All the good comprised in a holy salvation is what the sinner who believes, desires and receives. And as an inducement to believe, this good is to be described in all its preciousness, and to be offered to the sinner as a free gift, "without money and without price." And there is one thing more which the teachings of the inspired writers authorize, namely, to make a representation of faith by apt analogies. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." A man is visited with a dangerous illness. He applies to various physicians, but instead of being cured, he grows worse. He is finally informed of a physician of extraordinary skill, who has never failed to cure diseases like his. The physician comes. The sick man looks up to him with joy, and says, "I am nigh unto death, but I have confidence in you, and I now trust myself in your hands. Kind physician, pity and help me, a poor, dying man, and help me speedily." Now the feeling of that sick man's heart, his desire, his hope, his confidence, is, in some respects, like the feeling of those who are convinced of sin, and with confidence in the grace of Christ, apply to him for salvation.

Another illustration may be taken from the case of a man who has been forced from a burning ship into the ocean. He is exhausted and ready to sink, when a friend hastens to him with a boat, and says, take my hand, and I will save you. Now think with what a feeling this drowning man welcomes the approach of his friend, seizes his hand, and trusts himself to his care. That feeling resembles the feeling of the sinner who sees himself lost, and looks to Jesus for salvation. It resembles the act of believing in Christ.

Once more. A man by extravagance and vice is involved in debt, for which he is confined in prison. After indescribable sufferings in his gloomy cell, he is visited by a generous man, and

that man one whom he has often injured. The visitant says to the prisoner, "I have heard of your unhappy condition, and have come to relieve you. Here, if you will accept it, is money sufficient to pay your debt, and procure your discharge." With a broken but rejoicing heart, the prisoner accepts the favor from his generous friend. This transaction may illustrate what takes place when a sinner becomes sensible of his miserable condition, and with hearty confidence applies to Christ, accepts his kindness, and trusts in him for eternal life.

But although we may, in these and other ways, do something towards illustrating the act of believing in Christ; it is still true, that no one can rightly apprehend what it is, without being himself the subject of it. We tell a sinner, that faith is the act of one who is fully convinced of his sin and misery, and of the inability of himself and all other creatures to save him. But how can he get a clear idea of that act, when he has never had such a conviction of his guilty, ruined condition? We tell him, that faith is cordially assenting to the gospel offer, and receiving and resting upon Christ for pardon and eternal life. But how can he have a just conception of all this, when he has never seen the preciousness of the gospel offer, the all-sufficiency and glory of Christ, or the reasonableness and safety of trusting in him? A man can no more conceive aright what faith is without believing, than he can conceive what love is without loving, or what pleasure is without being pleased? And the result of all our endeavors to show what it is to believe in Christ, will be, that none but true believers will have any clear idea of faith. Unbelievers may have a shadowy conception of it, as we tell them it is like other things which they do understand. They may have a speculative knowledge of what Scripture teaches respecting the necessity, the object, and the duty of faith, sufficient to convince them of their obligation to believe, and the inexcusable guilt of unbelief. But what it is to receive Christ as a Saviour, is not truly known except to believers.

It results directly and certainly from the nature of faith,

whether considered generally, or with particular reference to Christ, that it produces important effects. The Scriptures represent it as having an efficacy which moves all the springs of action, and controls the whole man. And it is manifestly adapted to exert such an influence. Those things which God has set before us, as objects of faith, are infinitely important and excellent, and are suited to excite the warmest affections and the most earnest efforts. It is true, those objects are not perceived by our senses. But this occasions no uncertainty; for they are made known to us by the best possible evidence, *the word of God.* All must see, that the things which God has revealed would have a mighty influence upon us, if they were visible and present. But if we have faith, things not seen, and things which are to take place thousands of years hence, cause the same kind of emotions and exert the same influence, as if they were visible and present. For we know that they *will* be visible and present, and that they will soon be as important and as interesting to us, as they could be if they were visible and present now. So that if the perfections of God and celestial employments and pleasures are sufficient to move and govern the hearts of saints who are now in heaven, they are sufficient to move and govern our hearts. If the transactions of the judgment day, if the glorious appearing of the Lord from heaven, the assembling of the universe, the final sentence, the blessedness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, will be sufficient to arrest our attention, and kindle our feelings, and rouse all our powers of action, when those momentous events shall take place, they are sufficient *now.* And so far as we have faith, they will actually exert this influence. Men in general look at sensible objects. The things which are seen limit the sphere of their observation. But faith shifts the scene. As to the most momentous objects, it puts us in a new world. The believer looks not at the things which are seen, which are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal. He fixes the eyes of his mind upon them. In the high, spiritual sense, he *sees* them. They stand before him as

realities. They affect him more deeply than any earthly objects. They command his supreme regard.

The influence of faith, as a general principle, is clearly set forth in the Scriptures, particularly in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"*By faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." He believed God's promise respecting the seed of the woman. He listened to the appointment of sacrifices, and in cordial obedience to the divine direction, he offered the "more excellent sacrifice," that is, a lamb — representing the future atonement made by the Lamb of God. Cain's offering was faulty, because he was destitute of faith. He did not believe the promise of God, and did not sincerely offer the sacrifice required.

"*By faith* Enoch was translated that he should not see death." Enoch walked with God, and confided in his promises; and, as a reward of his faith, he was taken immediately to heaven without dying.

"*By faith* Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." Here both the nature and influence of faith appear. God informed Noah of the coming deluge, and commanded him to build an ark. And although the destruction of the world by water had never been heard of before, Noah was sure it would take place at the time predicted. God's word made it a certainty. And in consequence of his confidently believing what God had declared, he undertook and accomplished the laborious work prescribed. Thus it was by *faith* that he prepared an ark.

"*By faith* Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Abraham had full confidence in God, and looked upon the thing which he had promised as certain. His simple, unwavering faith in God was the principle of his conduct, and satisfactorily accounts for his leaving his kindred, and going out he knew not whither.

The writer (verse 13) speaks of the faith of those whom he

had particularly mentioned, and says; "These all died *in faith*, not having received the promises," (that is the good contained in them,) "but having perceived them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." God had promised them not only earthly good, but endless happiness in the world to come. They confidently expected the blessings promised, and began to enjoy them. Such was the nature and operation of their faith.

The faith of Abraham was strikingly illustrated in his conduct respecting Isaac. God had promised, that in Isaac his seed should be called, and all the families of the earth blessed. Thus everything was made to depend on the life of Isaac. If he should die, what would become of the promises? Yet Abraham had such a strong and confident belief in the faithfulness of God, that he hesitated not, when commanded, to sacrifice Isaac. Why was he not agitated and perplexed with the objections which might be made against the execution of such an appalling command? Because he had *faith*. Simple faith in God relieved all difficulties, and obviated all objections. But how would it be possible for God to fulfil his promise, if Isaac should be slain? With such a question Abraham gave himself no concern. He knew that God had promised and was able to perform. He knew that the Almighty God could do whatever the case required — that, if necessary, he could even *raise Isaac from the dead*, though a resurrection from the dead was an event which had never taken place. Thus, in this whole affair, the main spring of action was *faith*, that is, confidence in God, and a certain expectation that he would accomplish his word, whatever difficulties might stand in the way.

Joseph, at the close of his life, mentioned the departure of the Israelites, and gave commandment that his bones should be carried with them to Canaan, *by faith;* that is, because he believed the word of God respecting the posterity of Abraham, and looked upon their departure from Egypt and their inheriting the promised land as a reality, a matter of fact, just as we do now.

We are also informed of the faith of Moses. He believed the promises of God, respecting the deliverance of his oppressed

brethren, and the everlasting blessings to be conferred on the faithful in another world. He chose, therefore, to have his lot with the people of God, how much soever it might cost him. The good which he expected was, in his estimation, far better than all the treasures of Egypt, and far more than an overbalance for the sufferings which he might be called to endure. He had faith in God, and with full assurance anticipated the accomplishment of all his promises.

Finally, the inspired writer, in a strain of powerful eloquence, recounts the efficacy of faith in other instances. "What shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and the prophets, who *through faith*," that is, animated and borne on by confidence in God, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead, raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." All this they did and suffered by faith. They had confidence in God, and had no doubt of the fulfilment of his great and precious promises. The good held up before them excited their highest efforts, and made hardships and sufferings easy to be endured. Such was the influence of their faith.

Other parts of Scripture agree with this interesting chapter, in regard to the efficacy of faith. 2 Cor. 5: 7, "For we walk *by faith*, not by sight." We are influenced, not by the objects of sight, but by those invisible, spiritual objects, which are made known by the word of God, and which faith regards as precious realities. In Acts 15: 9, it is represented, that God purified the hearts of Gentile converts *by faith;* that is, by a cordial belief in the Saviour, and in the truths of his gospel.

It is easy to see, that *evangelical faith*, or *believing in Christ*, must have an influence preëminently important. For the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, comprise everything which is excellent and glorious, and which is adapted to awaken the gratitude and love of believers. Let us only apprehend who and what the Saviour is — that he came into the world to save sinners — that he redeemed us by his blood — let us behold and love this Almighty, all-sufficient Saviour, and cordially trust in him; and what manner of persons shall we be, in all holy conversation and godliness! We shall be drawn, by motives the most powerful and efficacious, to gratitude and obedience, to humility and purity — in a word, to everything lovely and excellent, both in feeling and in conduct. We shall abound in all the fruits of the Spirit.

From what has been said of the nature and influence of faith, it plainly follows, that *errors of opinion*, and *faults of character*, *are in a great degree owing to the want or the weakness of the principle of faith.*

A man who is governed by Christian faith, endeavors continually to conform to the word of God. That is his rule. Whether the doctrines which God teaches in his word are consonant to the dictates of his natural reason, or not, — whether comprehensible or incomprehensible, is not the question with him. *He inquires for the mind of God, as declared in the Scriptures.* When he finds this, his inquiry is ended, and his opinion fixed. He that relies upon his own reasoning for the discovery of the truth, is continually asking *how* this and that doctrine of revelation can be true, or how it can be consistent with some other truth. To such a man I would endeavor, in different ways, to give satisfaction. But one of my replies would be this. Suppose you cannot see *how* the doctrine can be true, or *how* it can be consistent with some other truth. What then? Is it strange that a being of so small a mind as man — a being of yesterday, who knows comparatively nothing, should be unable to see what God sees in regard to the deep things of revelation, and the consistency of the diffe-

rent parts of the great system of divine truth with each other? Is not the declaration of God a sufficient ground of belief? The true believer looks for no better ground than this. He desires to be taught of God. He sits at the feet of Jesus. But if, instead of this, a man abandons the principle of child-like faith, and leans to his own understanding, he comes at once into contact with error, and is exposed to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, and to embrace opinions which are totally contrary to the decisions of holy writ.

It is obvious that all the faults in our practice are, in a great measure, owing to the want or weakness of faith. Without faith, in the general sense, man has no motives to a holy life; because all the motives to holiness are found in those things which are the objects of faith, and which are brought, by faith, to have an influence over the mind. Were there no God, no moral law with sanctions, no future retribution, there would be no motive to right conduct. And if a man does not cordially *believe* in these objects, they will be to *him* as though they were not. It is, then, perfectly clear, that religious faith is indispensable to a holy life, and that all which is faulty and blame-worthy in our life, results from the want of faith. If we indulge the spirit of covetousness — if we set our affections on worldly honors or pleasures, it is because we are destitute of that faith which overcomes the world. If we cordially believed the truths of revelation — if we had a lively sense of the purity and goodness of God's law, — of our own guilty, ruined state, the abounding grace of Christ, and the realities of the future world — if the great things made known in the Scriptures were continually present to our view, and our understandings and hearts were filled with them, earthly riches, honors, and pleasures would no longer allure us, and a worldly spirit would die away.

How can we account for insensibility and sloth among those who profess to be followers of Christ? Are not the wonders of redeeming love, the interests of the soul and the things of eternity, sufficient inducements to pious diligence and zeal? Yes. But *unbelief* makes them appear distant and uncertain, takes away

their power to produce emotion and effort, and leaves us as supine and dormant, as though *these glorious* objects had no existence.

Our indifference to the salvation of sinners and the prosperity of Christ's kingdom must be traced to the same cause. Did we rightly apprehend and feel the certainty and importance of invisible, eternal things, what deep concern should we have for immortal souls, ready to perish! What strong desires for their redemption from sin and death! How alive should we be to every thing connected with the prosperity of Christ's kingdom and the interests of eternity!

It is the want of faith, that renders us so dull and heartless in our devotions. If in our seasons of worship we should, by faith, look into eternity and see, in the light of truth, the objects brought to view in the Scriptures; the vanities of the world would cease to occupy our thoughts, and all the ardor of our souls would be kindled up in our addresses to our God and our Judge.

If such evils result from unbelief; then how vastly important it is that we should be freed from it! And how important that we should take pains, in all suitable ways, to cultivate a steady, strong and lively faith! Our experience teaches, that the best means to increase our faith is, to *exercise* it. Every time we look at spiritual and eternal things with a full persuasion of their certainty and a just impression of their importance, we do something towards strengthening the principle of faith. But this salutary influence will generally be in proportion to the difficulty attending the exercise. A single instance of faith, like that which was repeatedly exercised by Abraham, will be more beneficial in its influence, than many acts of faith where no difficulty is encountered. Take care then, when you meet obstacles and dangers, when clouds and tempests arise, when sense and reason are confounded, and earthly supports fail, — take care to exercise a strong and steady faith. Trust in God. Fearlessly obey his word, and quietly repose upon his precious promises. In this

way your faith will acquire a strength which will render it invincible.

And let me add, that *deep* impressions of divine things, and *fervent* affections towards them, in other words, *animated* exercises of faith, will exert a far more salutary influence, than those exercises which are comparatively feeble. To acquire the character of unwavering and elevated faith, you must aspire to such apprehensions of divine objects, as will wake up all your moral powers, and excite to acts of vigorous, undivided faith. Such wakefulness and activity in the enlightened believer have an abiding influence. They produce an impression, which will remain through life, and will show its happy results in the world to come. How inexpressibly important then must it be, that those divine, eternal things, which are the objects of faith, should take deep hold on our intellectual and moral nature; should excite to lively emotion and vigorous action, and fill all our capacities. In pursuit of this end, let us diligently employ the means afforded us for elevating our piety. By retirement, by watchful care not to be engrossed with earthly pursuits, by devout reading of the Scriptures, by heavenly contemplation, by mortifying sinful affections, by spiritual converse with God, and by incessant desires and prayers for the illuminating, purifying influence of the Spirit, let us strive to get away from the delusion of sensible things, to rise above the world, and to bring our understandings and hearts under the power of divine truth; deeming ourselves happy, when favored, even for a few moments, with clear, spiritual knowledge and strong faith; and then proceeding from moments to hours, and from hours to days, till we come to look with an undiverted eye at things not seen and eternal, and, from morning to night, to have our feelings and actions swayed by faith in God. Oh! blessed attainment! When shall we rise to it? Lord, increase our faith.

LECTURE XCV.

THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

Our next subject is *the general duty of prayer*. But it is not to be understood from this arrangement of subjects, that prayer, in the life of a Christian, is separate from repentance and faith, and follows after them in the order of time. They in fact imply each other. There is no such thing as acceptable prayer without repentance and faith; and no such thing as repentance and faith in one who lives without prayer. Still propriety requires us to give to the duty of prayer a distinct and very particular consideration.

Prayer, in a general view, *is the utterance or offering up of holy desires to God*. It is a communication from the soul of man to the Creator and Redeemer of the world. The Scriptures represent it as *calling upon God, crying to God, and asking God*. But it must be remembered that the words spoken in prayer are merely an expression of the desires of the heart. Without holy affections and desires, the most devout words are but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. On the other hand, if without uttering any words, we have holy desires, we have the substance of prayer, though not its common form. The amount of true, acceptable prayer can never be estimated by the number of devout words which are spoken, or by the length of time employed in the duty. In the judgment of God, he prays most, who expresses the greatest amount of spiritual affections and desires.

After these hints as to the nature of prayer, I shall consider its *design* and *efficacy*. And here we must guard with sacred care against supposing, that the influence which the Scriptures ascribe to prayer, does in any degree supersede the agency of God in conferring the blessings which are consequent upon prayer. The efficacy of prayer is from God. The blessings secured by prayer are as really gifts of God, as if they were bestowed without any regard to prayer. In other words, prayer has no influence *of itself*, independently of God. If it has efficacy, it is because God gives it efficacy. He worketh all in all. And in prayer there is always an express or implied recognition of this; and in its exercise we are more and more impressed with the truth, that every good and perfect gift cometh from God.

The design and efficacy of prayer are clearly set forth in the words of Christ — "Ask, and it shall be given you." For the purpose of illustration, he refers to the readiness with which parents bestow favors upon their children. And he teaches that God is more ready to give spiritual blessings to those who pray for them, than we are to give good things to our children. This view of the subject is perfectly simple and plain. The influence of prayer is as intelligible and as free from difficulty, as the influence of means in any other case. Both in the natural and moral world, means and ends are, by divine appointment, connected together; so that by the use of the proper means, we obtain the desired end. Here you see the whole efficacy of means, and particularly the efficacy of prayer. By prayer, we avoid the most dreadful evils, and obtain blessings, both temporal and eternal, of the greatest worth.

No inspired writer gives a more striking representation of the influence of prayer, than the Apostle James. He says that, For more than three years, when prevailing wickedness called for divine judgments, the prayer of Elijah had, an efficacy to prevent rain. After that, it had an efficacy to bring down rain in copious effusion. But how much more precious is the influence of prayer, when it brings to believers the blessings of forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life, and when it pro-

cures the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the unconverted, and helps forward the redemption of the world from the power of sin. The effect of prayer in the case of Elijah, was indeed miraculous. But the Apostle, with evident propriety, makes use of it to illustrate the influence of prayer in other cases. For if God has such respect to prayer even in working *miracles*, he will unquestionably show equal respect to it in the common dispensations of his grace.

How the efficacy of prayer is explained and limited by the word of God will be more particularly considered in another place.

It is easy to see the *propriety* or *fitness* of prayer in all respects, particularly in relation to God and the ends of his government; in relation to those who perform the duty; and in relation to the blessings which it secures.

Prayer has a manifest propriety and fitness in relation to the Supreme Being, inasmuch as it is only such a treatment of him, as corresponds with his infinite perfections. How suitable it is that the eternal God, who is possessed of unbounded excellence, and is the fountain of all the good in the creation, should be the object of the devout affections which are exercised in prayer! How just and proper that we should approach our heavenly Father with veneration and love, and with filial confidence make known to him the desires of our hearts!

It is manifestly one of the great ends of the divine administration, to promote the *holiness* and *happiness* of his intelligent creatures. Now prayer is a leading and comprehensive exercise of *holiness*. And this particular exercise of holiness is indispensable. For if men should cease to pray, and thus give up the principal exercise of holiness, they would give up all the other exercises, and no holiness would remain on the face of the earth. For, in fact, what holy man lives without prayer? Or what man who lives without prayer, can be considered as holy? I say then, if there should be no prayer, there would be no holiness; and if no holiness, then no happiness. Thus the benevolent design of God in regard to the human race would fail of its accomplishment.

Prayer is evidently suited to the *nature* and *condition* of *those who are to perform the duty*. Were not our minds perverted by sin, the attributes and works of God would continually excite us to acts of religious worship. Parents and children in every family would bend the knee to God in supplication and praise. The youth in our schools and colleges, in our shops and on our farms, would delight in prayer. And what crowded assemblies should we have of persons of every age and condition, coming together with the fervent desire to enjoy devout intercourse with God!

Prayer is primarily and chiefly a matter of *moral feeling*. Reason decidedly approves of piety towards God. And where piety is wanting, reason wants its noblest exercise and its best gratification. But reason may suggest objections to the duty of prayer, which mere reasoning cannot obviate. It is under the influence of right moral affection that we rise above objections and difficulties, and draw near to the throne of grace, and pour out our hearts in humble prayer.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that we could have no motive to prayer, were we free from sin and misery. In a state of *perfect holiness*, we should have a deep, constant, happy conviction of our dependence on God. If deprived of intercourse with our heavenly Father, we could enjoy no good. Should we be excluded from the presence of him whom we supremely love, what desolation should we feel! Our very holiness (if indeed we could have any,) would be the source of misery to us, as it would create desires which could never be satisfied. In a state of moral rectitude, spiritual intercourse with God would constitute our chief good. Our worship would not indeed be prompted by guilt or by suffering. We should be like the angels in heaven, who are filled with pure love to God; and we should unite with them in the devout exclamation, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." While surveying his immutable perfections and the various acts of his merciful providence, we should utter the veneration and love and gratitude of our hearts in language like that of inspiration: *Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name*

—*Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory and dominion forever and ever.* In such forms as these would holy love impel us to worship the God of heaven. And who is authorized to say, that *supplications* to God for his blessing would be excluded? The holy Saviour abounded in supplications. And there appears no reason to doubt that mankind, had they remained perfectly obedient to God, would have sought and obtained his favors by prayer, although their worship would doubtless have consisted chiefly in pious admiration, gratitude, and praise.

But it is specially important to consider prayer in relation to those who are in a state of apostasy, guilt and misery. We are all transgressors of the divine law, and exposed to suffer an everlasting death, the beginnings of which have already come upon us. But through the great propitiation, our heavenly Father declares himself ready to pardon and save. Now when we look upon ourselves as criminals, condemned to endure all that is dreadful to the soul, shall we not confess our wickedness, and cry to that merciful Being, who is able to deliver us from the punishment we deserve? Shall we not beseech the great Physician, that he would remedy the moral disorder within us, which is so hateful in itself, and so destructive in its consequences? When we see ourselves poor and wretched, shall we not apply in humble prayer to him, who can remove all our poverty and wretchedness, and supply all our wants? And when we recollect what forbearance, what unmerited kindness God has shown toward us through our past life, shall we not render him hearty thanks? And in the exercise of benevolence and compassion towards our fellow-creatures, who are in the same guilty, ruined state with ourselves, shall we not lift up our souls to God in their behalf, praying that his grace may abound in their salvation?

Prayer, which is thus manifestly suited to our nature and condition, will spontaneously flow forth from our hearts, if we have right views and feelings respecting ourselves. Conscious of having offended God, we shall make penitent confession and seek forgiveness. Knowing ourselves to be poor and needy, we shall ask favor of a bountiful and divine Benefactor. Being fully con-

vinced that we are totally unable to secure our own spiritual welfare, we shall repair to him in whom is everlasting strength, and beseech him to guide us by his wisdom, to defend us from danger by his omnipotence, and to raise us at length to that high and holy place, which no one can ever reach without constant help from above. If our hearts are right, it will not be necessary for us to be told that prayer is made our duty by the authority and command of God. We shall be prompted to it by every thought and feeling of our souls. We shall pray for the same reason that we eat when we are hungry, or drink when we are thirsty, or stretch forth our hand for help, when in the deepest distress. We shall pray for the same reason that we breathe. Prayer is the spontaneous, vital action of the spiritual man — the very beating of the heart.

But there is one point which deserves to be considered a little farther. Among the most important personal blessings to be sought in prayer, is the increase of our pious affections, and the improvement of our Christian character. And prayer has in itself a direct tendency and adaptedness to secure to us this inestimable blessing.

Prayer tends to increase the strength of our pious affections, by bringing them into *lively action*. In sincere and fervent prayer, our repentance, faith, love, submission, and other Christian graces are exercised with special animation and fervor. Never do Christians so tenderly mourn for sin, or so firmly resolve to forsake it; never do they exercise so strong a confidence in God; never have they so full a conviction of the preciousness of the soul and the worth of salvation, and never are they so powerfully drawn to pious submission and obedience, as under the influence of such views of God, of Christ, and of eternity, as occupy their minds in prayer. By prayer they are best secured against error, and most firmly established in the belief of the essential truths of religion. The doubts and difficulties with which Christians are sometimes harassed, are all scattered, when in humble prostration of soul they draw near to God, behold his glory, and enjoy communion with him. Now as the various Christian graces are thus

brought into a state of the highest activity and fervor in the exercise of prayer, it follows, according to a general law of our nature, that they thus grow in strength; in other words, that the mind, by this lively exercise of the Christian graces, acquires a greater aptitude to their exercise in time to come, and to their exercise in an increased degree of strength. This is one way in which prayer evidently contributes to the improvement of Christian character.

But it is important to guard against a mistake which has come in as an inference from the fact just stated. Because it is the natural influence of prayer to increase our sanctification, it has been thought by some, that the only way in which prayer for spiritual blessings is answered, or in which it has efficacy, is the salutary influence which it naturally exerts upon the minds of those who pray.

But this was not the opinion which the sacred writers advanced. The Apostle James points out the influence of prayer very particularly. If any one was sick, he directed that the elders of the church should pray for him, and said that the prayer of faith would save the sick, and that the Lord would raise him up. He said also — "Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The earnest, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." The Apostle then illustrates the great efficacy of prayer by referring to the case of the prophet Elijah. But Elijah's prayer produced its effect not upon his own mind, but upon *the rain of heaven*. And in the other case mentioned, the efficacy ascribed to the prayer offered up by the elders, was not in the way of improving their own minds, but in healing the sick. These were indeed miraculous operations. But they were introduced by the Apostle, for the very purpose of illustrating the common efficacy of prayer, and of encouraging Christians generally to engage in the duty.

But if you would be still more satisfied on this point, consider the prayers of Jesus. His Father always heard him, and his prayers had the best possible influence. But he was always perfectly holy. Of course, it could not have been the design of

prayer to produce a sanctifying effect upon his own mind. And yet it was in his case, that prayer had the highest conceivable efficacy. And that efficacy was simply this. Jesus prayed, and God heard him. He asked for blessings, and God gave them, and gave them in answer to his prayer. It was doubtless true, that the pious exercises of Jesus contributed to the growth of his mind and of his holy affections. This was a natural effect of prayer in him, as well as in his followers. But the direct design and effect of his prayers was what I have stated. It was the procuring of blessings for his people.

Now as prayer is an obvious duty of all rational beings; as it is inculcated upon them by a God of infinite love, and as it is a chief exercise of holiness, it is a solemn truth, as before intimated, that *those who live without prayer are destitute of holiness.* Go through the world, and you will find no moral excellence, no true goodness in those, who do not worship the Supreme Being. They may have the semblance of goodness, but they have not the reality. They may possess amiable and useful qualities as members of domestic and civil society. But they possess nothing which corresponds with their high moral relations. That men may be truly virtuous and holy, they must know and love and worship him, who is the source and the pattern of holiness. According to the Scriptures, piety towards God is the basis of all real goodness, and those who do not worship God are under the dominion of sin. The nature of the case shows that it must be so. For if men have holiness, they will be sure to exercise it in the most natural and obvious way. If they really love what is excellent, they will certainly love and adore him who is supremely excellent. If they are benevolent, they will pursue the only way to accomplish the object of benevolence. If they are friends to moral law and government, they will cherish the principle which is the spring of obedience and submission. And if they desire pure and holy enjoyment, they will use the proper means of obtaining it.

These remarks apply in a measure to *Christians.* For if they who live entirely without prayer are entirely destitute of holiness, Christians must fall short in the degree of their holiness in pro-

portion as they at any time neglect prayer. If their prayers are obstructed, their growth in grace is obstructed. If they do not ask, they will not receive. And if they ask with only a low degree of fervor, they can expect to receive only a low degree of spiritual good. It is sometimes the case that hunger or cold reduces men to a state which seems nearer death than life. There may be a feeble motion of the heart, so that they are not absolutely dead. But they are as destitute of action and enjoyment, as if death had really passed upon them. To a state much like this are Christians sometimes reduced in consequence of the neglect of prayer. The power of religion is gone. And they have hardly life enough left to be sensible of the symptoms of death which are upon them. How deplorable is their condition! In their better days, they have known the preciousness of divine blessings. A fulness of those blessings is freely offered to them. With reference to forgiveness of sin, growth in grace, a useful life, support in trouble, and peace in death, their merciful Father says, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." How great must be our folly and guilt, and what merited reproach must fall upon us, if, by our inexcusable negligence, we deprive ourselves of blessings so precious and so easily obtained!

LECTURE XCVI.

EFFICACY OF PRAYER SUBJECT TO LIMITATIONS. OBJECTION ANSWERED.

It has thus far been my object to show, that prayer is the appointed means of obtaining the blessings which we need; that its efficacy consists in this, that, according to the promise of God, it secures his favors. The efficacy of prayer is not however to be understood in the most absolute sense, but is to be qualified by the word of God, and by Christian experience. My meaning is, that the texts which assert that God will answer prayer, are not to be taken without some restriction; and that if we would form an exact judgment respecting the influence of prayer, we must avail ourselves of other representations of Scripture, and of the instruction afforded by the course of divine providence. This is the mode of proceeding which we are accustomed to adopt in other cases. And it is in consequence of neglecting it, that men so often run into hurtful extremes respecting the doctrines and duties of religion.

In a general view, Scripture sets forth the influence of prayer in the strongest terms. And the providence of God corresponds with the teachings of Scripture. In all ages, prayer has exerted a glorious efficacy. But both the word and the providence of God, and the experience of his people, show that the efficacy of prayer must be understood with several important qualifications.

In the first place, it is to be kept in mind, that the act of prayer, in order to be efficacious, *must be accompanied with the various branches of holiness*. It must be accompanied with *faith*. "He

that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him." It must be accompanied with *humility* and *turning from sin*. "If my people shall humble themselves, and pray — and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin." It must be accompanied with *a forgiving spirit*. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father also who is in heaven, may forgive you." Prayer must be attended with *importunity*. So Jesus repeatedly taught. And it must be accompanied with *obedience*. The Apostle John, after long experience, said, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight." Such, according to the Scriptures, is the prayer which is efficacious to procure divine favors.

To explain this matter more particularly, I observe, in the second place, that *prayer can have no such efficacy as would violate the principles of the Christian religion, or be contrary to the usual methods of the divine administration*. However unqualified may be the language sometimes used to express the influence of prayer, we must always understand that influence to be limited by the principles of revelation. Suppose a man prays that God would give him liberty to live in sin, or would make him happy without religion. Can any one think that such prayer would prevail? Or suppose a man prays that the heathen may be turned from their sins and be made partakers of the great salvation, without any knowledge of the gospel. Would God give efficacy to such prayer? Again. Suppose a man who is in want of food for himself and family, prays that God would cause the earth to produce a harvest in the midst of winter. Or suppose a man, impatient of the slow movements of vegetation in the summer, prays that God would cut short the work, and cause the wheat which is sown in the morning, to spring up and come to maturity before the evening. Or suppose you look with compassion upon the people of God in their imperfect, suffering state, and pray that God would this very day make them complete in holiness and happiness, and receive them to glory. Can you think that in any of

these cases God would turn aside from his own chosen method of administration to grant such unreasonable requests? Do his promises imply that he will answer such prayers as these?

Thirdly; *prayer cannot have efficacy in any way which would be inconsistent with divine wisdom.*

The only wise God will accomplish his purposes in the most suitable manner. But in regard both to his purposes and the manner of accomplishing them, except where he has given us particular information, we are liable to mistake. We may regard a particular thing as a proper object of desire and prayer, and it may be that the desire and prayer are right in *us*. But it may not seem good in the sight of God that the thing desired and prayed for should be granted. It is plainly right for us to pray, that a dear friend or relative may be raised up from sickness, and be made a blessing to the world. But God may judge it best that he should not be raised up. And if so, then however benevolent and pious our feelings, however fervent our prayers, and however strong our confidence in God, the particular favor for which we pray will not be granted.

An instance in point occurs in the life of Paul. Considering what he called a thorn in the flesh to be a great evil, he prayed with importunity that it might be removed. But God, in his wisdom, saw it to be best not to remove it. Of course, the particular thing for which the Apostle prayed could not be granted. A servant of Christ, in a time of persecution, may pray, and ought to pray, that he may be preserved from the designs of his enemies. But it may seem good to that wisdom which cannot err, that he should honor his Lord by suffering as a martyr. There never was a more fervent prayer, or one more pleasing to God, than the prayer which Jesus offered up in the garden. And yet it was not consistent with the wisdom of God to grant the thing for which he prayed.

The same principle holds in regard to the *time* and the *means* of accomplishing what we ask in prayer. Christians visited with sickness may pray earnestly, and with confidence in God, that the means they are now using may be made effectual to cure their

disease. But God may judge it best that they should have a longer exercise of patience, and should afterwards be cured by different means. Their request for the restoration of health may be granted, though not at the time or by the means specified in their prayer.

But such instances may be viewed in another light. Although Christians in such a case really desire health, they desire another object still more, that is, the glory of God. It is chiefly for the sake of glorifying their Father in heaven by useful action, that they desire health. And if that great object may be promoted, they are content. In reality, their first, and in a sense their only prayer is, that whether by health or by sickness, by life or by death, God may be honored, and his holy cause advanced. Thus in one way or another their request is granted. If the inferior good is denied them, they are sure to obtain that which is the supreme and ultimate object of their desire.

To these limitations of the efficacy of prayer objections may be urged. It may be alleged that this mode of treating the subject tends to produce discouragement; that a hope and belief that God will hear our prayers and will give us the very things we ask, is necessary to excite earnestness and perseverance; that if we admit so many limitations and abatements of the efficacy of prayer, we must be perplexed and disheartened; and that, feeling it to be so uncertain, whether God will grant our requests or not, we shall be tempted to neglect prayer altogether.

To these objections I make the following reply.

1. *If the efficacy of prayer is, in fact, subject to such limitations as I have suggested, we ought surely to be aware of it.* To offer prayer, with mistaken views as to the manner in which God will regard it, must have an unfavorable influence, and must, in the end, occasion disappointment and distress. We ought, then, to labor assiduously to obtain just views of the subject, so that our prayers and our expectations of an answer may be conformed to the precepts and promises of God's word and the principles of his administration.

2. *The above mentioned limitations of the efficacy of prayer are evidently desirable and necessary.*

In numberless cases, we know not what would be best, either for ourselves or for others; and if we make requests, as we must, according to the promptings of our own minds, we shall be liable to ask for things which neither divine wisdom nor divine goodness can grant. And even in regard to those things which may be real blessings, and which God may be ready to give us in answer to prayer, we may have erroneous conceptions as to the time and manner of their bestowment. In a word, we are often totally incompetent to judge what is on the whole best; and if we would avoid the charge of arrogance, we must willingly submit to the infallible judgment of God. To him it of right belongs to control events. And although he allows and encourages us, in all circumstances, to make known our requests to him; still he reigns, and will order the affairs of the creation according to his own wise and holy will.

And 3. *The view I have presented of the subject does, in truth, correspond with the best feelings of Christians.* In regard to those cases in which the will of God is not made known, they may have desires, and may express them in prayer; but, if their hearts are right, their prayers will be *conditional.* They pray for health, or for success in some benevolent undertaking; but with a submissive temper. They are willing that God should deny their request, if it seemeth good in his sight. They indulge no wish that their prayer should prevail, unless it is consistent with the principles of revelation, with God's unsearchable wisdom, and with the established methods of his administration. The limitations mentioned are just what they would desire. On any other principles they would hardly dare to pray. As to all those matters, concerning which they know not what in God's view would be best; although they freely make known their requests in prayer, their hearts prompt them to say, as Jesus did, "Nevertheless, not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt." This subjection of our will to the will of God is implied in the Christian character.

To what conclusion then are we brought? It is said, if we admit so many limitations and abatements of the efficacy of prayer, we shall be disheartened, and shall neglect prayer wholly. This is the same as to say — if we cannot have our prayers literally answered, even when thus answering them would be in opposition to the wisdom of God and the settled method of his administration, we will not pray at all; — we will not pray, unless we can be assured that God will grant our requests, even when he sees it best not to grant them. To what a different result does the spirit of truth and piety lead! The devout Christian, being deeply sensible of his own liability to mistake, would, in many cases, be afraid to express his desires in prayer, unless he believed that his desires will be controlled by divine wisdom. But as he knows that God rules over all, he is emboldened to draw near to his mercy seat, and, with the spirit of a child, to pour out his heart before him, saying — these, Lord, are the desires of my heart. But ignorant as I am, and exposed to error — sinful as I am, and prone to indulge unsuitable desires, I cheerfully refer my requests to thee. Grant them, if consistent with thy will; if not, thy will be done. Remove or continue the suffering I endure, as seemeth good in thy sight. Such submission to God, and such confidence in his wisdom and goodness respecting the issue of our prayers, would be far from being a discouragement. On the contrary, it would be promotive, in the highest degree, of fervor and importunity. Never did any one manifest more importunity than Jesus did, when, under the pressure of unutterable distress, he repeatedly prayed — "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" though, at the same time, he referred it entirely to God to grant the request or not, as should be agreeable to his will. And who prays with more importunity than Paul did, when he thrice besought the Lord that his grievous affliction might depart from him? But he prayed with a readiness to bow to the divine will, and he afterwards showed that he was satisfied with the grace of Christ, and even gloried in it, though the particular favor he sought was not granted. And who can think that the Apostle ever entertained a lower opinion of the importance or the

efficacy of prayer, or prayed with less fervor, or less confidence in God, or less hope of success, because he had learned by experience, that, in regard to the manner of answering prayer, the Lord of heaven and earth will exercise his own unerring wisdom ?

LECTURE XCVII.

A MISTAKEN IDEA AS TO THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

THERE are not a few devout Christians, who entertain an opinion different from the one I have advanced on the efficacy of prayer. The opinion referred to appears to be associated with honorable conceptions of God, and is supported by arguments which must be allowed to be plausible, and which ought not to be passed over without serious consideration.

I would here remark, by way of precaution, that right views on the subject before us undoubtedly have a tendency to promote the spirit of prayer. Any opinion, therefore, must be regarded as more or less erroneous, if it be found to be unfavorable in its influence upon the practice of devotion. And if it shall, in fact, appear, that those who understand and embrace the view which I have taken of the subject, have less confidence in God; if they engage in prayer with less fervor; or if their general character is less influenced by their devotions; or if it can be fairly shown that the view which I have exhibited naturally tends to such a result; I shall admit at once, that my manner of contemplating the subject is open to a very grave objection. For it is very manifest, that the idea which inspired men entertained on this subject led them to attach the highest importance to prayer, and to engage in the duty with great fervency.

The opinion now to be examined is briefly this, *that the prayer of faith is, without any exception, successful in obtaining the particular favors which are sought, whatever those favors may be,*

and whether they relate to ourselves or others. As to the nature of faith — according to those who hold to the opinion above stated — the faith which should be exercised in prayer, is *a strong, confident belief that the very blessing prayed for will be granted — a full persuasion that the particular thing desired will be obtained.* According to this notion, if Christians pray in faith for this or that particular favor, they will certainly receive it. And if it is not received, it is because it was not sought *in faith;* that is, with a *confident belief that it would be granted.*

This opinion is liable to serious objections. It evidently involves an idea of faith, which is inadmissible. True faith, so far as the present subject is concerned, rests on the veracity of God in regard to his promises. Now it must be admitted by all that God will certainly fulfil his promises, *taken in the right sense.* To believe that God will fulfil his promises in a sense which he never intended, would be a great mistake. It then becomes a question of primary importance, how we are to understand the promises which God has made, in regard to his answering our prayers. Take a particular promise; and if you can find out the exact meaning of that promise, you will find out exactly what you are, in that case, to believe. For doubtless you are to believe in the *true* sense of a promise, not in a false sense. Matt. 7: 7, 8, "Ask, and it shall be given to you. — For every one that asketh, receiveth." Did Christ mean that this promise should be understood in the most unlimited sense — that is, that every single thing without exception, which his disciples should at any time ask, should be given to them? This could not be the case; for when they asked that *the kingdom*, that is, as they intended, that *temporal dominion* might be restored to Israel, the favor was not granted. The fact was, they mistook the meaning of God's promises respecting the Jews, and the request they made under the influence of that mistake could not be granted; for surely God will not turn aside from the plan of his righteous administration, to comply with the mistaken desires of his people. The same is true of the text under consideration. The promise to those who "ask" and "seek," is to be understood not in an

absolute but in a *qualified* sense. And if we ask any favor contrary to the true meaning of the promise, or to the scheme of God's providence, the favor is not to be expected. How earnestly soever any one may contend for the highest and most absolute sense of the promise before us, he will find it necessary to admit qualifications. The words of the promise are, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Does it mean that, if we ask God to give us a large estate, he will do it? Does it mean that, if we ask God to give us at once as much knowledge as Newton or Paul possessed, or to inspire us with the poetic genius of Shakspeare, or with the eloquence of Whitefield, he will bestow such a favor? Does it mean that, if we pray God to exempt us from dying, or to continue to us a useful life for a thousand years, he will grant our request? Does it mean, that if we should pray God to make us swift as an eagle to go to different parts of the world with the message of divine mercy, he would answer our prayer? No. The promise must be taken with limitations. And this is true of every promise of God, that he will hear and answer prayer. If we would know the mind of God, we must take his word as a whole. No single text can give us all the information we need. What might appear at first view to be the sense of a passage, may not be the *true* sense, but may require to be explained or modified by other parts of Scripture. This principle of interpretation is of constant use; and without it, we shall be likely to embrace the most absurd and contradictory opinions.

It is also true, that we are in many cases to make out the exact meaning of the declarations of God's word *by attending to the course of his providence.* His providence is in accordance with his word, and they often help to explain each other. The disciples of Christ inferred from certain passages in the Scriptures, that the Messiah would not die. This mistake of theirs was corrected by the events which took place. Again. Suppose they had understood his predictions recorded in Matt. XXIV, as implying that he would come to raise the dead and judge the world within thirty years. As he did not so come, they must have learned their mistake, and must have interpreted those predictions in

agreement with the course of the divine administration. In many instances, Christians have been constrained to modify and sometimes entirely to change their opinion as to the meaning of particular predictions, by observing that events take place differently from the opinion they first entertained. And so they must continue to do, whenever there is occasion for it. And there may be occasion for it in regard to the question so often agitated at this day, whether the Jews are to return to Palestine. If they do not return, those who understand the promises to mean that they will return, will find it necessary to change their opinion. And if they do return, those who have judged differently will correct *their* mistake. All will finally understand the *predictions* alike. Come now to the subject before us; and suppose that we understand the promise of God to hear prayer in the most absolute sense, and that with this understanding, we pray God to raise from the dead a beloved parent or child, now lying a lifeless corpse before us, verily believing that what we desire will take place. Will not our experience show that the meaning of the promise is not what we supposed? If those who take the promise of God to hear prayer in the unlimited, absolute sense, will look at the case of the Apostle Paul, whose earnest prayer to God was that the Israelites might be saved, and will notice the fact that the favor he asked was not granted; they must either deny that Paul prayed aright, or must acknowledge that they labored under a mistake as to the meaning of the divine promise. If then we would form a right conception of the efficacy of prayer, we must carefully attend to the course of divine providence, and to the whole compass of revelation. In this way we shall come to the conclusion, that God's promise to answer prayer is to be understood with the qualifications and restrictions which have been suggested, and which are not only reasonable in themselves, and correspondent with the teachings of Scripture and with the experience of the church in all ages, but perfectly agreeable to the best feelings of Christians.

I said that the misconception referred to respecting the efficacy of prayer, involves an inadmissible idea of the nature of faith, particularly that which is exercised in prayer.

Let us examine this subject, and see what are the teachings of the inspired writers.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God *must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" Heb. 11: 6. Here all is plain. We must believe in God, — the true God, a Being of infinite perfection. Of course we must believe in all the declarations of his word, particularly in all his promises, *rightly understood.* We must believe that he is "the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The inspired writer does not say, we must believe that God will bestow upon those who come to him every particular favor which they at any time ask, but that he will *reward* them. He may, in many instances, reward them, by granting them other and better favors, than those which they ask. We must believe that he will fulfil his promises to answer prayer *according to their true intent.* And if they are to be understood with such limitations, as have been pointed out; then we are to believe that they will be performed under those very limitations.

But the limitations and exceptions which I have named, *do not relate to the blessings which are essential to salvation.* It is in regard to other things, which may or may not be best for us, that the notion of faith which we are considering, is evidently incorrect. And surely it cannot be supposed, that a faith which is not warranted by the word or the providence of God, will procure, without any failure, the very things we desire. It would be more reasonable to think, that a faith, thus overstepping its proper bounds, and waxing bold and confident in respect to things which God has reserved in his own power, must be regarded with disapprobation.

The blessings of forgiveness and sanctification, and all the blessings involved in a free and full salvation, are unquestionably secured by the promises of God, to all true worshippers. And if we have faith, we shall believe, without any doubt, that God will reward those who diligently seek him, by the bestowment of all these spiritual blessings. It is certainly implied in the promises of God, that the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, with

all his precious fruits in the present world, and eternal life in heaven, shall be the portion of every believer. The bestowment of all this good, in God's own time and manner, will, we know, be consistent with the principles of revelation, and with the established methods of the divine government. It would plainly contravene the principles which infinite wisdom has expressly established, if any believer should fail of receiving any part of this complete salvation. Here all is certain. And here we find all the encouragement to faith and prayer, which can reasonably be desired. The promise of God that he will bestow these spiritual blessings in answer to believing prayer, is to be understood in the most extensive sense. He will do even more "than we ask or think." No limits are admitted, except as to the time and manner of accomplishing the promise.

We must then regulate our faith in regard to the efficacy of prayer by the true meaning of God's promises,— considering those promises to be either with or without restriction, as the general current of Scripture, the nature of the subject, and the obvious principles of the divine government require. Confidently to believe that the very favors we ask will be granted is, in some cases, the exercise of a just and Scriptural faith. But in other cases, to believe this would be a wide departure from the true sense of the promises, and from the experience of God's people in all ages. And if we should attempt to carry into practice the notion of the efficacy of prayer which I am controverting, we should involve ourselves in endless difficulties and perplexities. We should be obliged to put an unnatural force upon our own minds in order to bring ourselves to believe what we have no grounds to believe; and after all we should fail of exercising the faith we labored after, unless we should close our eyes against the light of divine truth.

What a blessed relief from all this confusion and disquietude of mind shall we experience, if we have the faith which the Scripture represents as essential to acceptable prayer — believing *that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him.* This faith, fixing, as it does, on the eternal existence and infinite perfection of God, and on his promises to those who seek him, be-

gets freedom, fervency and perseverance in prayer, combined with the spirit of humility and submission.

The nature of the faith which is to be exercised in prayer, may be very clearly illustrated by adverting to some of the examples of it which are recorded in the four Gospels. Take then, the case of the Centurion, who besought Christ to heal his servant, and who was spoken of by Christ as having great faith. But what was his faith, and how was it manifested? In the first place, he sent Jewish Elders to request Christ to come and heal his servant. By this he showed his *confidence* in Christ as able to effect a cure. But this confidence was more clearly manifested afterwards. For while Jesus was coming towards his house, he sent friends to him, saying, "trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." And to show how strong was his confidence in Christ's power to heal by a word, he referred to his own authority over his soldiers, who rendered him an instant obedience. In this way the Centurion manifested his "*great faith.*" It is not said, he believed and certainly knew beforehand that Jesus would heal his servant, as though he had the gift of prophecy. But, he believed that Jesus had *power* to heal, and power to do it *by a single word*, though he was at a distance from the sick person. When the Centurion applied to Jesus, he, of course, believed him to be very merciful, and hoped to obtain the favor he sought. But his *great faith* was his *great confidence in Christ's power to heal.*

Take another instance. Two blind men cried to Jesus, saying, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." Jesus said to them, "believe ye that I am *able* to do this?" He did not ask them, whether they believed that he certainly would restore their sight, but whether they believed that he was *able* to do this. They answered, *yea, Lord.* This was their faith. At another time they brought a paralytic to Jesus. And not being able to come near him for the press, they uncovered the roof of the house, and let down the bed whereon the paralytic lay. "When Jesus saw their faith; i. e. when he saw from their conduct *what confidence they*

had in his power to heal, and what hope too of obtaining the blessing desired, he said to the sick man, "thy sins are forgiven thee — arise, take up thy bed and walk."

Again. A man brought to Jesus his son, who had a dumb spirit. After describing the distressing case he said, "if thou *canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." This led Christ to say — "if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" implying that the man was wanting in faith, inasmuch as he had not perfect confidence in Christ's power to grant the favor desired. "And straightway the father cried out with tears — Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Upon this Jesus granted his request.

The same principle is apparent in the case of Jairus, who fell at the feet of Jesus, and said, "my little daughter lieth at the point of death; come and lay thy hand upon her that she may be healed, and she shall live." This was his faith. After some time, while Jesus was on his way to the house of Jairus, some came and said, "thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the master any farther?" But Jesus said to Jairus, "be not afraid, *only believe*" — have the same confidence in me now when the child is dead, as thou hadst before when she was sick. The conclusion of the story shows that he had the same confidence, and that Christ made it manifest that his confidence was not misplaced.

These examples show, that the faith of those who applied to Jesus, consisted essentially in this, that they had full confidence in him as *able* to do all that was desired, and such confidence too in his *mercy*, as led them freely to present their requests to him, and to cherish the *hope* that they should obtain the blessings which they sought.

The views which I have exhibited might be still further illustrated by referring to the example, in which Christ charged his disciples with being deficient in faith. What he inculcated upon them was, such an entire trust in God in regard to their wants, their trials, their duties and their dangers, as would prevent anxiety and fear, and give them tranquillity and peace.

It must now, I think, be obvious to you, what is the faith which

we should exercise in prayer. We should believe in the being, the perfections, the government, and the word of God. We should have a cordial trust in him in all respects, particularly in regard to the subject of prayer, whether God has actually promised to bestow the particular favors we desire, or not. If he has really promised to bestow the very favors which we ask in prayer, we are to believe that he will bestow them, and that he will do it in the wisest and best manner. If God has not promised to bestow the very favors we ask, then we are to trust in his infinite wisdom and goodness, believing that he is *able* to bestow the favors sought, and that he will do it if it is best. And if he does not bestow them, we are to trust in him still — to trust in him, though he deny us the particular favors sought, and visit us with the severest afflictions. *This is faith.*

LECTURE XCVIII.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH FURTHER CONSIDERED.

THE subject which we have had under consideration, and which I wish still further to pursue, is *the prayer of faith.* And I proceed in this discussion with a deep interest, because I am persuaded that right views on the subject will promote confidence in God, importunity in prayer, and all the pleasures and benefits of fervent piety.

The opinion which I have considered as in some respects a departure from the truth, is, *that the prayer of faith is always efficacious in obtaining the particular favors which are sought; and that those who pray in faith, assuredly believe that they shall obtain the very things they ask, whatever they may be.* I have already endeavored to show, by several considerations, that this view of the subject is liable to serious objections.

But to show still more clearly the mistake of those who maintain this opinion, I shall offer some additional suggestions.

I must say then, that the distinction which their scheme implies, between the prayer of faith and other acceptable prayer, is without foundation. Every acceptable prayer is a prayer of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." Hence it appears that all acceptable prayer is offered up in faith. The distinction, then, has no foundation.

Consider further that, according to the Scriptures, prayer is en-

titled to an answer on account of other qualities, as well as on account of faith. "The *righteous* cry, and the Lord heareth." "The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon him in *truth*." "The Lord will fulfil the desire of them that *fear* him." "God forgeteth not the cry of the *humble*." "Whatsoever we ask, we receive, because we *keep his commandments*." According to these passages, righteousness, truth, fear, humility, and obedience afford as real a reason to expect an answer to prayer, as faith. These qualities of prayer do indeed imply *faith, rightly understood.* But is it true, that every man who is righteous, humble and obedient, has the kind of faith on which I have animadverted? I ask too, whether every prayer which has been offered up by the righteous man, by the man who believes in God, and who is humble and obedient — whether every such prayer has been answered by the bestowment of the very favors which have been sought? What is the fact? Take the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to offer up, and which all Christians have offered up, times without number, from age to age. Has every petition contained in this prayer been fully granted, according to the desires of devout worshippers? One of these petitions is, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." Has this prayer, which believers have presented to God so many millions of times, been successful in bringing men universally to perfect obedience? If not, the opinion under consideration is not true. Indeed it would not be true if any Christian had ever offered up this petition, even once, with a believing heart. For the opinion is, that every prayer offered up in faith, will secure the very thing requested. So that if all Christians, for eighteen hundred years, had failed to offer up this prayer in sincerity and faith, with the exception of only one, yet if that one Christian had offered it up, even once, in a right manner, the opinion above mentioned could not be true; because the world has been and is, to so great an extent, in a state of disobedience.

You may perhaps say, that the *will* of God named in this prayer, is not his *preceptive* will, or his law, but his *decretive* will, or his purpose, and that, in this sense, the prayer of Christians

has been exactly answered. My reply is, that if the will of God is so understood, it has indeed been done on earth, as in heaven; and this would have been the case if it had never been made the subject of prayer, and if there had never been any Christian to pray. And according to this meaning of the word, there would be just as much propriety in praying, *thy will be done in heaven, as it is done on earth*, as in praying, "thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

Some may possibly say, that when Christians offer up the petition referred to, they do not intend to pray, that God's will, that is, his law, may be completely and universally obeyed at *present*, but that it may be obeyed at a future day, when, according to the teachings of the prophets, all men shall serve God. But I appeal to facts. Do not Christians pray, and do they not mean to pray, that all men now living, may be made holy and obedient? Where is the good man who, surveying a world of sinners, and considering the preciousness of their souls and the abounding grace of Christ, does not sincerely desire their salvation, and does not express his desire in fervent prayer? Such prayer for the salvation of men — of *all* men, so far as they are contemplated — grows out of the Christian's character. It is the natural operation of his benevolence. And such has always been the practice of the people of God. And when an Apostle says he does not enjoin prayer for those who have committed the sin unto death, it is plainly implied that prayer is to be offered up for all others. — Besides, if it is not right to pray for *all* men, *now living*, it cannot be right to pray for a considerable part of them, nor for any part, except those who are chosen to salvation. But how can we know who those are, before they are converted? It must then be improper to pray for any sinners, or to make any efforts for their salvation, unless we know that they are to be saved.

But I have said enough on this point. It is the acknowledged duty of Christians, and it has been their universal practice, to pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. But this prayer has never yet been accomplished to a thousandth part of the extent to which their benevolent desires have reached.

There are other facts still, which bear on the subject. Christians pray God to forgive and bless their enemies. Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified him, and Stephen for the forgiveness of those who stoned him. Persecuted Christians have always prayed for their persecutors. Now we must conclude, either that all those for whom Christ prayed, and those for whom his followers have prayed, have been forgiven, or else that true and acceptable prayer has been offered up to God for blessings which have not been granted.

Christians, in imitation of the Apostle, pray that the followers of Christ may be freed from all sin, and be perfect in every good work. But have these requests been fully accomplished?

And are the prayers which believers offer up for *themselves*, fully answered at present? They beseech God to sanctify them throughout, in body, soul and spirit, — to make them holy as he is holy. But have Christians in this life ever been as holy as they have prayed that they might be? If you say, that Christians only pray that they may be fully sanctified *ultimately*, but not *at present*, then I must leave the decision with Christians themselves. Do they not at times earnestly desire and pray that they may now be delivered from all sin, without exception, and may be completely conformed to the divine will? Can it be that believers in a right state of mind, address themselves to God in such a manner as this: — *Lord, I pray that I may be perfectly cleansed from sin at a future time, but not now — that I may completely bear the image of Christ when I arrive at heaven, but not while I abide on earth?* It is, I apprehend, implied in the very character of the regenerate, that they hate all sin, and sincerely desire and pray to be completely holy. But they always, during the present life, fall short of that which they desire to attain. What they would, they do not; and what they would not, that they do.

You will observe too, that the people of God seem never to have been surprised or discouraged by finding, that the particular things they have sought in prayer, have not been at once fully granted. For example; they have prayed that the blessings of salvation might be granted to all men, and the world be filled with

the glory of God. And though they have continually seen that this great work has not been actually accomplished, they have, from generation to generation, prayed for it still. And thus they pray now; and thus they will continue to pray, so long as they have benevolence to man and faith in God, although the work which is so dear to their hearts, is still delayed. The same is true respecting the prayers of Christians for themselves. They constantly pray that God would take away all iniquity, and make them complete in all the will of God. But they find themselves still imperfect. Their prayers are not, at present, fully efficacious. This, however, does not prevent them from continuing to pray. Nor do they infer from this, that they have not prayed in sincerity and faith, or that their prayers are in vain. They cherish the pleasing thought that God does hear and accept their prayers, and does, *in a measure*, answer them even now; and that, although he does not at present give them all the good they ask, he will do it ultimately. And by diligently searching the Scriptures, and by the help of experience, they come to see and feel, that it is altogether suitable for them to labor and pray for perfect sanctification as long as they live, although, for the present, their prayers procure only a part of the good which they seek. And under the guidance of that wisdom which is from above, they at length view the subject in such a light, that their not obtaining at present a complete accomplishment of their devout desires, instead of operating as a discouragement, increases the fervor and importunity of their prayers.

Such being my view of the subject, it has appeared to me a singular fact, and one not easily accounted for, that any sober-minded and intelligent Christians can retain the opinion which I have endeavored to confute. How can they set aside their own experience, and the experience of others, and the current representations of Scripture? Are they not conscious, that many of their most fervent prayers, — prayers in which they feel the strongest confidence in God, do not secure the particular favors they desire? And do they not see that this is the case with the best Christians around them, and that it was so with those whose

history is given in the Scriptures? How then can they hold to the opinion, that the promise of God secures to them all the particular favors, whether of one kind or another, which they ask in prayer? Do pious parents and ministers adopt the conclusion, that all the prayers which they offer up for themselves, for their children, or for others around them, and which do not secure the very favors desired, are unbelieving and unacceptable prayers? In what gloom and despondency would such a conclusion involve them! The real fact seems to be, that those who hold to the opinion on which I have so freely remarked, have formed the habit of overlooking those parts of Scripture and experience which stand against their favorite opinion, while those things in God's word and providence, which appear favorable to their opinion, are carefully treasured up, and are made the exclusive ground of their reasoning and judgment.

One of the arguments which such persons rely upon, in support of their opinion, is, that many prayers, which have been offered up with the kind of faith referred to, have been successful; for example; that when ministers and Christians pray for a revival of religion, with a strong belief that it will soon take place, it does in many remarkable instances actually come to pass.

Now I readily acknowledge that, in some instances, a revival of religion is brought about in answer to such prayers. But it is equally manifest that, in other instances, those who pray for a revival of religion in the manner intended, are disappointed. Nay, the extent of the good obtained is never equal to their devout desires. Now why do they not see that these instances weigh as much against their opinion, as the former do in favor of it? Indeed, as it is their opinion that the prayer of faith *always* secures the very blessing sought; any instances of failure clearly disprove that opinion.

The fact should also be mentioned, that a revival of religion often takes place in answer to prayers which are not offered up with the confident belief referred to. In instances too many to be numbered, sinners have been converted and the church increased, where ministers and Christians have labored and prayed,

with hearty trust in the power and mercy of God, but without a specific and confident belief that the very thing they desire will certainly be granted. And it is, I think, true, that Christians generally prevail in prayer in proportion to the *strength of their desires* for the good sought, and the *fervor and importunity* which they exercise in their petitions for it, rather than in consequence of a confident belief that the very thing prayed for will be granted. It cannot be doubted that God looks upon the former as of higher value, than upon the latter.

But it can, I think, be satisfactorily accounted for, that ministers and Christians often pray for a revival of religion with a somewhat confident expectation that it will take place, and an expectation which is fully realized, in perfect consistency with the views I have endeavored to defend. It may be that, in the cases referred to, ministers and Christians have *some obvious reasons* to hope and expect that there will shortly be a revival of religion. We are taught by experience, in connection with various intimations of Scripture, that certain things are generally precursors of a revival, just as certain things are generally precursors of the conversion of individual sinners. Now if Christians can fix their eye upon any of the common signs of an approaching revival; it is just as reasonable that they should hope for that event, as that they should hope for a shower of rain when there are all the common signs of rain. Such a hope, if it results from sober experience and observation, is a matter of judgment — a rational conclusion. And if the indications of an extraordinary work of the Spirit are very clear, it is proper that the hope of Christians should rise to expectation, and should animate them to more fervent prayer and more diligent labor, for the accomplishment of the expected event. If this is what is meant by praying *in faith* for a revival of religion, I have no objection. There is no mistake, except in the signification of a word. It is praying with confidence in God — with love to souls — and with a strong hope and expectation, resulting from those things which have been found to be indications of a revival, that such a desirable event will soon occur. Prayer, offered up in such circumstances and in

such a manner, is no doubt likely to be efficacious in bringing forward a revival of religion. And we ought to render thanks to God, that, in so many instances, such prayer has been followed by a glorious work of the Holy Spirit.

But what shall we say if Christians, independently of anything in themselves or in others which indicates an approaching revival, should, in some unaccountable way, work up their minds to a confident belief that a revival will shortly take place? Would not this be as unreasonable as for a man, in time of a drought, to work up his mind to a confident expectation of rain, when there are no signs of it? And yet Christians, thus misguided in judgment, may confide in the mercy of God, and may love the souls of men, and may offer up prayers, with cries and tears, for the conversion of sinners; and, in all this, they may be graciously accepted. And, in many instances, God who hears prayer, and who passes by the imperfections and mistakes of his people and approves of all that is holy, may, in answer to their fervent prayers, pour out his Spirit and revive his work. Remember, however, that the success of their prayers does not prove their notion of *faith* to be exactly right. What I mean to say is, that notwithstanding their mistake, there may be that in their prayers to which God will show his special regard, by building up Zion. But although such prayers should *generally* have an influence in actually bringing forward a revival of religion; still, if in any cases they fail of this, the opinion against which I have argued is proved to be incorrect. It is proved to be so by a *single instance of failure.* For the opinion is, that prayer offered up in the manner specified, *always* secures the very favors which are sought.

After all, the mistaken opinion which we have been considering is not, in my view, so dangerous to the interests of piety, as the opinion of those who consider prayer to be of little importance, and attribute to it little or no efficacy. The mistake I have noticed may be attended with humility, with fervor in prayer, and with trust in God. Indeed the mistake may, perhaps, in some cases, be actually occasioned by the strength of faith and the

warmth of love exercised in prayer. For if Christians see that the particular blessings they pray for are exceedingly desirable and precious, and have, at the same time, confidence in the unbounded mercy of God, they will be very likely, with their imperfect knowledge of what may on the whole be best, to indulge the idea, that God will certainly grant the very blessings they ask. And undoubtedly God will regard what is incorrect in their opinion as a far less evil, than the fault of those who undervalue and neglect the means which he has appointed for obtaining spiritual blessings. In our zeal, then, to correct the mistake of some ardent but injudicious Christians, let us take care not to commit or countenance a greater mistake. It is better to have something of the heats and irregularities of enthusiasm, than the stupor of a cold and heartless philosophy. Let us always cherish the sentiment in our own minds, and inculcate it upon others, that God will hear his people when they pray, and, whether he grants the particular favors they ask, or others in their stead, that their fervent prayers avail much.

The chief argument in support of the opinion which we have so particularly considered, is found in Mark 11: 23, 24, and in some other similar texts. Jesus said, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." What Jesus here said to his apostles related to the withering of the fig-tree, and to events of a like nature. And it was evidently intended to excite in them an expectation, that similar miracles would be wrought through their agency, and to instruct them as to the faith and the prayer which would be successful in such cases. The truth of Christianity was made to rest upon the miracles which they undertook to perform. The credit of their cause, therefore, required that they should have a miraculous influence of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to know infallibly that

certain events would take place — which they could not know by natural means. It is clear, that their power to work miracles did not extend to all cases. It was a power which they were to exercise on particular occasions, not according to their own inclinations, but according to the will of God and to the inward guidance of the Holy Spirit. Had they then attempted to work a miracle, without being certainly assured by a divine impulse that it was the will of God that the miracle should be wrought; they would have exposed their character and the gospel they preached to reproach. Their certainly believing that they should receive the miraculous favors which they prayed for, must have resulted from a divine influence in their minds, like that which made known future events to the prophets. And yet, although the miraculous dispensation is evidently past, it is thought by many that the passages above mentioned, which directly related to miraculous events, are to be applied, in all their extent, to Christians now, and that they are, in all cases, to exercise the same kind of faith in prayer, as the apostles did in regard to miracles. But it is remarkable that, while they pretend that the passages relate to themselves just as they did to the apostles, they do not sometimes attempt to work miracles. If they would give clear proof that the texts in question are applicable to Christians at the present day, let them perform such miraculous works as those referred to, at least in some few instances. Let them say to a barren tree, *be thou withered away;* or to a blind man, *receive thy sight;* or to a man dead, and buried in the earth, *come forth;* and let us see these things take place. We will then believe that the texts referred to relate to Christians now, just as they did to the apostles. But the fact is, that Christians of sober minds never attempt to perform such works; nor do they ever make them the subject of prayer, however desirable they may seem to be in themselves; thus showing that, after all, they do not regard the texts under consideration as really applicable to Christians at the present day.

One thing more. I ask those who hold to the opinion against which I have argued; — how do you come to know that the par-

ticular things you desire will be granted? How do you obtain this assurance? You say the assurance is involved in the very nature of the prayer of faith. The assurance being then involved in the prayer itself, must result from an immediate revelation, making known facts which could not be known by natural means. Hence this assured belief, or knowledge, which is said to constitute the faith to be exercised in prayer, can be no more the duty of Christians generally, than the gift of prophecy, or the power of working miracles.

It gives me pleasure to find that Dr. James Richards maintains the views which I have advanced, with great clearness and strength of argument, in his Second Lecture on the Prayer of Faith. He says: "There is reason to believe that in the primitive church two kinds of faith were employed: one *extraordinary*, being peculiar to individuals who had the gift of working miracles; the other *common*, belonging to all Christians. — Both were the result of divine teaching. — Still they were in various respects different from each other. The first, which was connected with miraculous operations, was not necessarily a gracious exercise. Not so the faith common to all true believers. This, in all cases, is a holy exercise.

"The faith of miracles seems to have been a firm persuasion not only of the divine power, but that the contemplated miracle *would certainly be performed.* It did not stop with the fact, that God was able to accomplish it, or that he had promised to accomplish it on any supposed conditions, or that he was a God of truth, and would not fail to redeem his pledge; but it went to the fact, that the miracle contemplated would be performed. How this point was reached will be an after consideration; but that the faith in question did reach it, is evident from the manner in which Christ describes this faith, in Mark 11: 23, 24. Words could scarcely be framed, which would mark with more precision the fact that faith, in this case, was to believe that the miraculous events would certainly take place.

"Those who wrought miracles often intimated such a persuasion, before a miracle was performed. Thus Peter, when he

healed the lame man, said to him, *Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have I give thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.* And when he cured Eneas, he said to him, *Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed;* and he immediately arose. It is obvious, in both cases, that the Apostle had the intention and expectation of working a miracle, antecedent to its being wrought.

"Those gifted with the power of working miracles did not always attempt to display that power; or if they did, they failed through unbelief. Paul — left Trophimus at Miletum sick; which cannot be accounted for but upon one of two suppositions, either that he did not attempt to heal him, or attempted and failed. Whichever is true, it is certain he had no well grounded persuasion that the thing would be done. — "This faith," (the faith of miracles) — " —— was built on evidence not only that the power of working miracles was imparted to men to be exercised on fit occasions, — but that it was the pleasure of God that a miracle should be wrought at the time and in the circumstances contemplated. — But how could it be known that such was the pleasure of God? — Our reply is, that the purpose of God might have been known by the immediate suggestion of the Holy Spirit. Nor is there any inherent improbability, that those who wrought miracles by the power of the Holy Ghost, should receive intimations from him when and where these mighty works were to be performed. — But allow the intimation we have supposed from that ever present Spirit who was given to the primitive disciples — and all difficulty vanishes.

"But there is another kind of faith, common to Christians in all ages — a faith which takes hold of the divine attributes and the divine promises, without any miraculous intimation concerning the result." *

* Both these Lectures of Dr. Richards' to which I have referred, are worthy of a careful perusal.

LECTURE XCIX.

WHAT DEFINITE VIEWS ARE WE TO ENTERTAIN OF THE INFLUENCE OF PRAYER?

During the preceding discussion, the inquiry has probably arisen in your minds, *whether there is any way to determine when our prayers will secure the particular blessings we ask, and when this is not to be certainly expected; and what definite conceptions we are to form on this subject.*

Here I shall more particularly set before you a principle, which has already been suggested; namely, that *the sincere and fervent prayers of Christians do invariably secure the special favor of God, and all the particular blessings which are involved in it, — all the blessings which are necessary to their salvation.* This principle, well considered and applied, will, I hope, conduct you to some satisfactory results.

If then, in sincere prayer to God, you ask for those blessings which the special favor of God implies, or which are necessary to your eternal well-being, such as the forgiveness of sin, the sanctifying and comforting influence of the Spirit, and the enjoyment of God in heaven; you will certainly receive the very blessings you ask. If you heartily worship God and seek his favor, your eternal happiness is sure. As to the time and manner in which God will bestow spiritual blessings, your desires and expectations may not be particularly met. But the blessings themselves will be yours. In his own time and manner God will certainly bestow them. You may ask for pardon, sanctification, divine guidance, comfort in trouble, and eternal blessedness in heaven, and you

shall, without fail, receive them in all their fulness. And if, when you pray for these spiritual blessings, you are conscious of sincerity and trust in God, your belief in the divine promises will imply a belief, that the very blessings sought will be granted. It was doubtless to these spiritual blessings the Apostle John referred, when he said; "We know that whatsoever we ask, we shall receive, because we keep his commandments." He had his eye upon the great things which are essential to eternal life, and which appeared to him so important, that he lost sight of other things, and could hardly think them worthy to be mentioned. As though he had said; *all our requests in regard to the great things of salvation will be granted. Whatsoever we ask that is important to our eternal interest, we know that we shall certainly receive, because we are God's obedient servants, and enjoy his special favor.* In this manner we are to understand the words of Christ; *ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.* He says this with an implied reference to those things which are of paramount importance to his disciples, and in possession of which, whatever else they may want, they will say, *all things are ours.*

But there are other things, as I have already remarked, which are not necessarily implied in salvation, and which God may see to be inconsistent with our highest good. There are many personal favors, such as health, competence and friends, which may, in a subordinate sense, be the objects of our desire, and which we may properly ask God to give us. And there are many thorns in the flesh, many trials and sufferings, from which we may pray to be delivered. As to such things as these, the efficacy of prayer must be subject to the limitations which have been specified. God, in the exercise of his wisdom and love, may grant the favors desired, or may withhold them; may deliver us from the evils we suffer, or may continue them. In regard to things of this kind, the spirit of our petitions should be, *Lord, grant our requests, if consistent with thy wisdom. If otherwise, we submit. Not our will, but thine be done.*

But you may ask, how God can be said to hear our prayer, when he does not grant our petitions. In regard to this, the

truth seems to be, that while God does not answer prayer *literally* and *directly*, he does it *indirectly*. He accepts our prayer, and from regard to it bestows blessings upon us, — not the specific blessings for which we prayed, but others which are more important in their stead. Thus in the case of Paul, the Lord evidently accepted his prayer, but instead of taking away the thorn in the flesh, he said, *my grace is sufficient for thee*. This was more than an equivalent, such a *virtual* or *indirect* answer being better than a *literal* answer.

The same is true in regard to the *manner* in which prayer even for *spiritual* blessings is answered. We pray for the increase of our humility, love and other branches of holiness, and hope to receive the favor sought *directly and sensibly*. God bestows the favor, but in another way, generally by means of afflictions or crosses. He answers the prayer, not in the manner contemplated by our fallible minds, but according to his own infinite wisdom and goodness. And surely every Christian must be satisfied with this.

But how is it with regard to the prayers which are offered up for sinners? Have we any assurance that our sincere and fervent prayers will be answered by the salvation of all for whom we pray?

I have already noticed this inquiry, but shall now reply to it more particularly.

If it be true that our fervent prayers will certainly secure the salvation of all for whom we pray; then the impenitence and destruction of every sinner who is lost, must be charged to the account of every minister and every Christian. For it is the duty of every follower of Christ to pray, in sincerity and faith, for the salvation of all sinners on the face of the earth. If such prayer would certainly secure the salvation of all sinners, as it does the salvation of believers themselves; then their not being saved would prove that such prayer had never been offered up. On this supposition, it was owing to the criminal neglect of Paul and the other apostles, that the Jews and the Gentiles were not universally saved. And then, how could Paul declare that he was pure from

the blood of all men? And how could he say that he kept a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men? And what reason had the apostles to think that they were a sweet savor unto God — that is, acceptable to him, in them that were saved and in them that perished? While, then, it is certain that the prayers which the believer offers up for his own forgiveness and salvation will certainly secure the good for which he prays; the prayers which he offers up for others cannot be viewed in the same light; and the divine promises respecting the two cases cannot be understood in the same sense.

What conceptions, then, are we to entertain respecting the influence of the prayer which is offered up for the conversion and salvation of sinners? And are these conceptions such, as to afford a proper and sufficient encouragement to pray for this object?

My first remark is, that *all right prayer is acceptable to God, and will, in one way or another, secure his blessings.* The prayers which Christians offer up for the conversion of sinners, come from the benevolence and compassion of their hearts. God regards them with approbation; and, as an expression of his approbation and in answer to their prayers, he pours out his Spirit and turns sinners — some sinners from darkness to light, perhaps not speedily, but in due time. And if sinners, if any sinners, are sooner or later converted through the prayers of believers, they will say in eternity, when all things appear in their true light, that God did indeed mercifully answer their prayers. They will witness the accomplishment of their pious desires, and will see that their prayers had a precious influence, even all the influence which the unerring wisdom of God judged it right to give them. More than this they could not desire.

My second remark is, that *all which God ever does, in converting and saving sinners, he does in answer to prayer.* His purpose is to save a great multitude of our revolted race; but he will be inquired of by his people to accomplish this work of redeeming mercy. In this view, the importance of prayer is exceedingly manifest. How could God give it a higher value, than to make it

the means of carrying into effect his wise and benevolent designs? When Henry Martyn was in Persia, he offered up many prayers and made many other efforts for the salvation of Mohammedans, Jews, and Pagans. But how little did he accomplish during his life! Unthinking observers, looking only at first appearances, might say, that he prayed in vain. But they might just as well say, that all his pious labors were in vain, seeing the effect they produced was, for the time, so inconsiderable. And on the same principle they might say, that the labors and sufferings of Christ on earth were almost in vain, because few comparatively believed on him during his life. But what will become of this opinion in a coming day, when it shall appear, that what Christ did and suffered on earth, though for a time attended with so little good effect, was the certain means of salvation to all the redeemed; and when it shall appear, too, that the labors and prayers of Henry Martyn were a part of the system of means which God employed for the conversion of India and Persia. It shows a narrow way of thinking, to suppose that the real influence of prayer is to be measured by its effects to-day, or to-morrow, or by its effect on the particular individuals we may have in view when we pray. For God doubtless makes prayer the means of good, hundreds and thousands of years after it is offered up. And he may as really answer prayer in this way, as by connecting blessings with it at the time when it is offered up.

I remark, thirdly, that *the degree of influence which prayer has, is doubtless in some proportion to the degree of holy affection exercised in the duty.* Prayer offered up by Christians with deep humility, with ardent love, and with strong confidence in God, will, we apprehend, secure a larger amount of good to themselves and to others, than if it were offered up with less humility, faith, and love. This seems to be implied in the declaration of James, that the *fervent* prayer of the righteous availeth much; and it is plainly implied in the instructions of Christ, as to the sure success of *importunity* in prayer. Why may not this principle be applied to all the particular things which are sought in prayer? For example; if parents pray for the conversion of

their children with a high degree of holy desire and with persevering importunity, they have a better prospect of obtaining the blessing they seek, than if they prayed coldly and inconstantly. And in general, the grace of God in the conversion of sinners and the spread of the gospel, is to be expected very much in proportion as the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon believers.

Fourthly. *In the great work of promoting the prosperity of Christ's spiritual kingdom and the conversion of the world, there is need of the united prayers of Christians.* We are social beings, and, in order to accomplish any work of great importance, we must combine our efforts. What could a single man do towards carrying into effect the great schemes of public utility or convenience, which have been executed in our own country and in other parts of the world? And what could a single Christian do towards translating the Bible into all languages, and printing a number of copies sufficient to supply all the families of the earth, or towards preaching the gospel to all nations? The same as to the present subject. Prayer, as a means of promoting the enlargement of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of the world, must be in proportion to the greatness of the end in view. For example; it cannot be expected that the prayers of a single Christian, even of an Apostle, will, by itself, be effectual to the conversion of the *Jews*. Paul prayed for their salvation, and prayed evidently with great earnestness and sincerity. But how little was the apparent effect! The conversion of the seed of Abraham, and of the whole Gentile world, is now regarded by Christians as the great object to be sought in their prayers. But it is a work of vast extent and immense difficulty, and is to be accomplished, not by the prayers of a single Christian, though he may be a Brainerd, a Martyn, or a Paul, but by the united prayers of a great multitude. No one prays without producing a real and important effect. But the world's conversion is an object of inconceivable moment, and calls for the combined influence of the importunate supplications of all believers in every part of the earth. The Scriptures confirm this view of the subject, by the

great stress which they lay upon *united* prayer. Paul thought it of special consequence to his safety, that the devout Corinthians should *help together by prayer for him.* And even in regard to miraculous operations, it was necessary, in some cases, that at least two should join in prayer. Viewing the subject in this light, what an animating prospect have we at the present day, of the spread of the gospel and the enlargement of Christ's kingdom. The united prayers of Christians, in different and distant parts of the world, every month, and every Sabbath, and every day, for the salvation of the human race, must come up with acceptance before God, and have a prevailing influence in bringing forward the universal triumph of divine grace.

Finally; *the accomplishment of this great work of benevolence requires not only the united, but the long-continued, persevering prayers of God's people.* The united prayers of all Christians, offered up once, or a few times only, would fall far short of the desired efficacy. But if they pray with united and persevering importunity, they will at length prevail. Such is the wise appointment of God. It would, in most instances, be a mistake, should we expect the full attainment of the good we have in view, by means of a single prayer, or prayer repeated a few times. Our complete sanctification is not to be effected in this way, but must be the consequence of fervent cries to heaven, continued through the whole period of our life. Parents, who seek the grace of God for their children, must not think it strange if that grace is, in many cases, withheld, till they have labored and prayed for many years, and in some instances till the end of their life. But perseverance in prayer is still more important and necessary, in order that all nations may be brought to obey the gospel. Let, then, the whole body of Christians continue their united and earnest supplications to God, from year to year and from age to age, for a world lying in wickedness; and their prayers at every period will avail much, and, in connection with their faithful labors, will at length prove an effectual means of conveying the blessings of salvation to all the ends of the earth. And what Christian, when he beholds the fulfilment of God's promises

in the conversion of the world, and knows that his prayers, though seemingly without influence for a time, did really contribute to that glorious event, will hesitate to say, that God has truly, in the highest sense, heard the voice of his supplications and graciously answered his prayers, though once, in his ignorance, he perhaps thought them disregarded and forgotten.

I shall conclude these Lectures on Prayer by a few practical remarks on the performance of the duty.

1. *The word of God does not lay down any precise rules in regard to the time, the frequency, the length, or the form of prayer.* The Psalmist, at different times, represents his devotional exercises to be different. Now he speaks of praying evening, morning, and at noon; and now, seven times a day. The stated time for prayer among the Jews was, according to our reckoning, 9 o'clock, A. M., 12, M., and 3, P. M. But these seasons would be exceedingly inconvenient for the mass of Christians in Europe and America. The example of Christ was various. Sometimes he went to a solitary place, and prayed before the morning light appeared. Sometimes he continued his devotional exercises all night. In his distress, the night before his crucifixion, he went away from his disciples and prayed three times, prostrating himself on the ground. Previously, on the same night, he offered up the prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. He prayed twice at the institution of the Sacred Supper. He offered up prayer at his meals, and sometimes when he wrought miracles, and finally, during his agonies on the cross. If we would copy his example, we must always be in a spiritual and devout frame, and look to God in prayer frequently and with freedom, according to circumstances. His instructions on this subject were various, but were evidently not intended to contain any precise rules, to which his disciples were invariably to adhere. The particular form of prayer which he gave them showed clearly with what spirit they should pray, and what kind of petitions they should offer up to their Father in heaven. But

there is no evidence that his disciples considered him as prescribing an exact form of words which they were to use in prayer. And if we examine the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles to the churches and individuals, we find many examples of prayer offered up by them on different occasions, and many exhortations to prayer. But what proof is there that they ever prayed in that precise form which is called the Lord's prayer, or that they expected Christians to do so? They inculcated sincerity, reverence, earnestness, and perseverance; but they said nothing as to the particular time, the length, or the form of prayer. All these things they left to be determined by the experience, the judgment, and conscience of Christians. And in all this we have clear evidence of the wisdom and goodness of God. For, while it is the duty of all Christians to pray, how would it be possible for them to conform to one and the same rule? How could prayer of the same length and the same exact form be offered up by the aged, by young persons, and by little children — by Christians in health and in sickness, in wealth and in poverty, in joy and in sorrow? How burdensome and embarrassing would be any attempt or any feeling of obligation to do this! How incompatible with the free spirit of filial piety!

2. But although God has not given us precise and universal rules as to the time, length, and form of prayer, it does not follow that these things are of no consequence, or that we are incapable of arriving at any just conclusions respecting them. By the proper exercise of our own reason and conscience, by a proper regard to the precepts of God's word, and to the example of Christ and his people, and by means of our own experience, we may arrive at some definite and satisfactory conclusions. In the books of devotion which have been written by men of eminent knowledge and piety, there are maxims and rules respecting prayer, which you may study with great advantage. But these maxims and rules possess no authority over us, except so far as they are derived from Scripture. As to all uninspired directions and rules, we are to judge, though we must do it in the fear of God, whether and how far they are suited to our particular case. Many and

excellent are the devotional books with which a merciful providence has favored us. In the use which we are to make of them, our chief aim should be, to get our minds deeply impressed with the principles of piety which they illustrate, and imbued with the spirit which pervades them, and then, without attempting to copy too minutely and exactly all that may have been beneficial to others, to endeavor to profit by their writings and their example, and to advance ourselves to higher and higher degrees of holiness.

It is clear, from the very nature of man and from common experience, that *some regular method* of devotional exercises, is important in the Christian life. In all ordinary circumstances, we must observe set times for prayer; otherwise we shall be in danger of frequent neglect, and shall deprive ourselves of the great benefit of *habit* in our devotions. After fixing our method, which we ought to do with much consideration and care, conforming, as far as may be, to the common method of eminent Christians, we should endeavor so to arrange our affairs, that we may not be turned aside from our settled course. By conscientiously adhering, for a length of time, to the method of devotion which we have adopted, we shall form a *habit of regularity;* and this habit will be a safeguard against forgetfulness and neglect, and will have a mighty influence to insure a persevering discharge of this most important duty.

But while such a pious habit, which results from a regular attention to the common method of devotion, is in many respects of great moment; and while we should, with the most watchful resolution, avoid whatever would interfere with it; we must not forget that the habit itself is, after a while, likely to beget formality and deadness. Such is man, such are the wisest and best of men in the present state, where everything tends to evil. It is a well-known, but lamentable fact, that a steady, uniform course of religious duty, without which we can never attain to any considerable strength of Christian character, cannot be long continued without exposing us to a coldness and dulness which will render all our services unprofitable. In what way shall this deplorable consequence of uniformity and habit in religion be prevented?

Here comes in the importance of *some uncommon means of grace — some extraordinary seasons of devotion.* The people of God in all ages have found such seasons necessary, and have experienced the happy effects of them. They cannot be neglected without great loss. If we exercise a sound judgment and discretion in setting apart special seasons for fasting, self-reflection and prayer, and apply ourselves with becoming earnestness to the proper exercises; the benefit to our spiritual interest will be great. We shall be raised above the listless, dormant state which generally results from one unvarying course of action. The deeper penitence and humility, the stronger faith, and the more fervent love, which have, through divine grace, been exercised on our days of fasting and prayer, will diffuse their influence through all our ordinary duties. These extraordinary seasons will thus be productive of a two-fold benefit. They will excite more intense and powerful exercises of holiness at the time; and these exercises will extend their good influence beyond the time, and will infuse new animation into the common duties of religion, and give greater life and energy to our devotional habits. In this way we shall experience a solid and permanent improvement in our spiritual state, and shall make some approximation to the uniform and elevated piety of our Lord and Master.

Before closing the discussion of this subject, I would ask your attention to two additional suggestions.

The first relates to the choice of a plan in regard to the time, the length, and the form of our prayers. Here much assistance may be derived, as I have said, from the holy Scriptures, and from the writings of uninspired men. But if we would experience the greatest benefit from these helps, we must possess a *truly devotional state of mind.* Such a state is itself a most valuable guide, and a help to the best use of every other guide.

My other suggestion is of very serious consequence. I have already said in general, that we must guard watchfully against all hinderances to the spirit of prayer, and to the growing profit and pleasure of devotion. I shall now speak of that which is the greatest of all hinderances, namely, *the predominance of sin in the heart and life.*

It is evident from the word of God, and from Christian experience, that a holy life is indispensable to the enjoyment of communion with God in prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The reason is that in such a case our prayers will be radically faulty, and so cannot be acceptable to a holy God, and cannot receive any mark of his approbation. A life of steady and cordial obedience keeps our whole spiritual state sound and active, and so prepares us to engage with promptitude in every duty, and particularly in the duty of prayer; just as bodily health prepares us to receive and appropriate wholesome food. Communion with God in prayer is food to believers. But they cannot enjoy it unless their souls have the health and vigor which flow from a life of watchful obedience. Those who live a holy life will love to be near to their heavenly Father, and to hold spiritual converse with him; as a dutiful child loves to be in the presence of his parents. But disobedience, or neglect of duty in Christians, tends to make prayer irksome, and leads them, as it did the transgressors in Paradise, to hide themselves from the presence of God. Offenders ought indeed, without delay, to repair to God, and with penitent and humble hearts to sue for mercy. But the state which is usually consequent upon sinning is wholly unadapted to communion with God. The power of conscience or the kindling of love and penitence in the heart may overcome the reluctance of offending Christians to approach God, — may overcome it again and again. But every time they offend, the pain of confession and repentance is likely to be increased, and they will become more and more reluctant to engage in that duty, in which there must be repentance and confession — more and more inclined to forsake the throne of grace. Sin is truly *the great hinderance to piety.* Its very touch is death to the spirit of prayer. If you go through the families that enjoy religious instruction, and search for the reason why so many parents and children neglect prayer, you will find the reason to be, that they regard iniquity in their hearts, and are not willing to forsake it; and that in this state of mind they feel a strong aversion to go into the presence of a God who is perfectly holy and just, who

disapproves of their ungodly life, and with infinite authority commands them to turn from it.

Further. Sin indulged in the heart or acted out in the life, is a hinderance to piety, by occupying those thoughts and affections which ought to be employed in prayer. If sin wholly occupies and engrosses the affections, as it does in the impenitent, the spirit of devotion will be wholly excluded. And if sin occupies the thoughts and affections in any degree, as it often does in Christians, it will, in the same degree, exclude those affections which constitute piety. Thus the mind will be divided, and only a part of its activity remain for God. And the consequence will be, that the principle of piety will be weakened and impaired, just as a man's power for bodily action is impaired by a palsy, which spreads its deadening influence over half the body.

But sin carries its evil influence beyond particular affections. The faculties and operations of the mind are so closely connected, that whatever affects one of them, does more or less affect them all. Thus, if sin gains influence over a part of the affections, it not only turns away that part from the exercises of piety, but extends an influence over the other affections also, at least so far as to render them unfit for the more spiritual parts of devotion. Nor is this influence of sin over the affections limited to the exact time when it is committed or indulged. Its influence continues; so that the affections which next arise, and those which follow, although they may in some degree be holy, will be less holy than if the sin had been avoided. And who can tell how long the morbid effect of sin may continue, even in Christians, and how long it may detract from the life of their devotions? They frequently complain that their souls cleave to the dust, and that their affections will not rise to God. And they may sometimes be unable to fix upon the cause of this unhappy state, there being nothing in their present circumstances which can satisfactorily account for it. But this low, wretched state has a cause. And that cause may possibly be found in some sin, open or secret, which they were guilty of many months or years ago. That particular sin may have passed away from their memory; but its influence has

not passed away from their heart. And it may be that this indestructible influence of a sin committed so long before, is the cause which still interferes so fatally with the spirit of prayer.

Again. Sin proves a hinderance to piety by preventing the proper use of the common means of promoting it, — thus taking away that which was appointed to be the very nutriment and support of the spiritual life. Suppose you give indulgence to some forbidden disposition, or allow yourself to transgress some divine precept; what benefit can you derive from the Sabbath, the word of God, and other means and ordinances of religion?

Finally. Sin, allowed in the life or in the heart, proves a hinderance to piety, by offending God, and preventing that influence of the Spirit which is the spring of all acceptable prayer. Unless the divine Spirit dwell in us and help our infirmities, our piety will languish and die. But will God grant that precious gift to those who do that abominable thing which he hates? Let us then put away all the works of iniquity. Let us subdue pride and love of the world, all unholy thoughts, all impure and earthly desires. Let no sin have dominion over us. Then, the barrier between us and God being removed, we shall come freely and joyfully into his presence, and he will manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world, and we shall be the temples of God through the Holy Ghost.

LECTURE C.

THE GOSPEL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION EXPLAINED.

I SHALL think myself happy, if, amid the different and clashing opinions which are held on the subject of Justification, and amid the difficulties which arise from the ambiguous use of words, I may be able to advance anything which shall contribute to the benefit of those who are inquiring after the truth. My aim will be, to set forth what is obvious and plain, and to cast what light I can upon what is in its own nature obscure, or has been made obscure by an improper treatment.

And as no one can rightly understand the gospel doctrine of justification, without a just conception of the character and state of those who are to be justified, I shall direct your attention, first of all, to this point.

It must then be well considered and kept in mind, that those who are to be justified, are transgressors of the divine law; by nature children of wrath; and enemies to God by wicked works. According to the Apostle, Rom. 4: 5, God justifies *the ungodly*. All men have sinned, and they are all to be regarded *as sinners*. And if they afterwards cease to sin, they must still in the eye of the law, be regarded as sinners. Their personal ill-desert as transgressors is not done away because they do not continue to transgress. A man who has committed murder, is always considered as guilty of that crime. If, when brought before a court of justice, he pleads not guilty, then evidence is produced that he actually committed the crime charged against him. He may say,

he did it ten years ago. So be it. He committed murder; and that is the thing he is charged with. He may say, he did it only once. Be it so. He is charged with doing it only once. His having committed the murderous deed so long ago does not alter the case, as he is the very man who did it. The fact that he has not repeated the offence does not diminish the criminality of that one offence. The law, justice, truth, conscience, — his own conscience and that of others, all pronounce him guilty of murder, — as really guilty as if his hands were now stained with the blood of the victim; and he dies as a murderer, according to that ancient and unrepealed law, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." And if he is pardoned, he is pardoned *as a murderer*. That is, he is freed from the punishment which law and justice denounce against him for the heinous offence he has committed. Whatever may be the reason of his pardon in the mind of the magistrate, his desert of punishment as a murderer remains untouched; unless indeed new evidence has come to light, proving him to be innocent of the crime. But in this case he would be acquitted as an innocent man, not pardoned as a guilty man. And so release from punishment would be a matter of justice.

All this is true in regard to transgressors of the divine law, which is holy, just and good. Whatever the penalty of that law is, they deserve to endure it. Their exposure to the penalty arises simply from their having transgressed the law. Neither time nor circumstances can alter the law, or the fact that they have transgressed it, or their desert of punishment. If they are punished, they are punished as transgressors, according to the just penalty of the violated law. If they are pardoned, they are pardoned *as transgressors*. God forgives their sins, and forgives them *as sinners*. Whatever may be the reason or ground of their forgiveness in the mind of God, it does not imply that they are not transgressors, or that they do not deserve to endure the penalty of the violated law. It is then an unalterable truth, that men are transgressors, and that they must be regarded as such, and that in law and justice they deserve the punishment threat-

ened; and consequently, if they are exempt from that punishment, it must be by an act of mercy on the part of God. These things must remain unaltered, whatever measures may be adopted by the wisdom and benevolence of God to prepare the way for the forgiveness of sinners.

Let it not be forgotten, that the gospel dispensation and the exercise of divine mercy towards the human race, instead of implying that they are innocent, does, from the beginning to the end, proceed on the principle that they are personally ill-deserving, and justly exposed to the penalty of the law. And when any of them are brought to a right mind, they feel and acknowledge this to be their case. Their consciences and hearts agree with the sentence of the law, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." This law is unchangeable, like the God from whom it proceeds. Other things may change; but the law of God, and the blame-worthiness of transgressors, cannot change. Transgressors may receive favors from God, but they will be undeserved favors. They may be saved; but their salvation will be of grace. They may become holy; but this also will be of grace; and their becoming holy will neither do away nor diminish their desert of blame for the sin they have committed. And when it is said, that sin is not imputed to those who believe, that their guilt is taken away, that God will not remember their sins, and that no one can lay any thing to their charge; the language must be understood in harmony with the facts above stated; otherwise it would convey pernicious error.

But to what does Scripture refer, when it speaks of *the law* and *the deeds of the law*, and particularly when it declares that we are not justified by law? What is the prevailing Scripture use?

Let any one examine the passages in which *the law of God* is mentioned in the Psalms and the Prophets, and he cannot doubt that they refer to the moral as well as the ceremonial law. Consult Psalm 19: 7—11, and different parts of Psalm cxix, as examples. The law of the Lord, his statutes and commandments, which are declared to be so excellent, and so efficacious for good, must be understood to be primarily the moral precepts of the law,

including however the ritual part, when the circumstances of the case require. The New Testament usage is evidently the same. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ speaks of "the law." What law? Why, the law which was not to be destroyed or set aside, (Matt. 5: 17—20,) which can be no other than the moral law. The same is manifest in Matt. 22: 36—40, where we find a summary of the moral law, that is, the command to love; and in Matt. 23: 23, where moral duties are referred to as the weightier matters of the law. See also Luke 16: 17, 18. Attentive readers will indeed see, that Christ speaks of the law in a variety of senses, sometimes intending a portion of the Scriptures, sometimes the ceremonial law, sometimes the moral law, and sometimes both the ceremonial and the moral. The context and the particular subject of discourse generally make it evident which of the senses is intended. But when any are spoken of, who sought to be justified by their own works, or who relied upon their own righteousness to procure the divine favor, the moral precepts are specially referred to, although the ritual part of the law is included. Thus in Luke 18: 11, 12, the boasting Pharisee claimed the merit of having done moral as well as ceremonial duties. Again; when the question was proposed, which is the great commandment of the law, the answer brought out the command requiring love.

Proceeding farther, we find that when the sacred writers professedly handle the subject of our being justified by law, or by works, they refer directly to moral precepts. See Acts 13: 38, 39. Paul said to the Jews at Antioch, "Be it known unto you, that *through this man* is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and *by him* all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." They are completely justified — entirely acquitted from the guilt of all their transgressions of law, — for which full acquittal no provision was made in the law of Moses.

But this is made still clearer by other places. In the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle first proves, that all men are sinners under condemnation, and thus prepares us to understand the doctrine of justification. There are only two ways of enjoying the

favor of God and the blessedness of his kingdom. The first is, by complete obedience — by doing all things written in the law. To such there is a promise of life. "He that doeth these things shall live by them." But all men are transgressors, and are therefore cut off from the possibility of being saved according to the provisions of the law, and are under the curse. The other way of salvation is revealed in the gospel. Christ died for our sins, and thus procured forgiveness. Here is salvation by grace. And in this free and gracious salvation we become interested by faith. All this is taught Rom. iii. The Apostle, after showing that all are guilty before God, comes directly to his conclusion, v. 20, "Therefore by the deeds of *the law* there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." What law? You find an answer in the same verse; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The Apostle shows that it is by the moral law that we have the knowledge of sin, in Rom. 7: 7. "I had not known sin but by the law;" and then he gives an instance of this, showing what law he meant; "for I had not known lust, i. e., sinful desire, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." The moral law is plainly meant in both places; for in both the Apostle speaks of that law by which we have the knowledge of moral evil; and in the last place referred to, he makes it perfectly plain that he refers to the moral law, by specifying one of the moral precepts. It is then by the deeds of this law, that no flesh can be justified before God.

It is indeed true, that when the Apostle asserts, Gal. 2: 16, that we are not justified by the works of the law, he has a special reference to ritual observances. Those observances were the particular things in question, and it was a matter of course that he should tell those who made so much of ritual observances, that they could not be justified by them. The principle is universal; we cannot be justified by the works of the law, either moral or ceremonial. If it is true that transgressors cannot be justified by any works of obedience, even by obedience to the spiritual precepts of the law; it is certain that they cannot be justified by obedience to the ceremonial precepts. This is what the Apostle had occa-

sion to say, Gal. 2: 16. He merely asserted and applied a particular truth contained in a general truth. The circumstances of the case required him to refer to the law in this lower sense, that is, to its ceremonial precepts. But in other cases, his proposition that we cannot be justified by law, must be taken in its largest sense, the moral precepts being specially intended, while the ritual precepts are also included. In Rom. iii, this is clearly the case. The Apostle, having declared that all men are transgressors of God's holy law, and having stated his conclusion, that we cannot be justified by works of law, points out the new and living way of being justified. "God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." It is by this new method of justification, here called *the law of faith*, that all boasting is excluded. In v. 28, the Apostle repeats what he had before said, v. 20. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of law. I ask again, what law? v. 31 furnishes an answer, by asserting that the law spoken of, is the law which the gospel establishes. But it is the moral law which is established by the gospel, while the ceremonial code is abolished.

In Rom. vii, the Apostle represents the law of which he speaks to be holy, just, and good, and says that he delights in it after the inward man. No one can suppose he would speak thus of any law, except that which is moral and spiritual. He often tells us how happy he was to be freed from the burden of the ceremonial law.

In Rom. 10: 1—5, the Apostle again treats of this great gospel doctrine in opposition to prevailing errors. The Jews went about to establish their own righteousness by works of law. He says, this was vain; that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. To make this clear, he again affirms, that the only condition of justification by the law, is described by Moses, Lev. 18: 5, "Ye shall keep my statutes and judgments; which if a man do, he shall live by them." To suppose that moral precepts were not included would be doing palpable injustice to the writer. This passage is adverted to by Nehe-

miah in a manner which clearly indicates what sense he put upon it. He says, "they dealt proudly, and hearkened not to thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them." It would be strange indeed if the Prophet, when describing the great wickedness of the people, charged them with nothing but a neglect of the prescribed outward observances, which was really the smallest part of their guilt.

If you doubt whether *perfect* and *continual* obedience is required in order to our being justified by law, the doubt may be removed by considering on whom the curse of the law falls. In Gal. 3: 10, the Apostle speaks of the law for the very purpose of showing that we cannot be justified by it; and in pursuance of this object, he says, "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." The quotation is from Deut. 27: 26. "Cursed is he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." This is a summary of the curses pronounced by Moses for a great variety of offences. And it should be particularly remarked, that *the transgressions specified were all transgressions of moral precepts, no mention having been made of offences against the law of rites and ceremonies.* Now if those fall under the curse, who do not perfectly obey the law, then the promise of life cannot apply to any one who has transgressed. How obvious then is the soundness of the Apostle's conclusion, that no transgressor of the law can ever be justified by the law. Having sinned, they are under the curse. This is the way in which the Apostle treats the subject of justification. His language is very plain, his argument clear, and his conclusion obvious and certain. Whatever else is obscure in his writings, there is no obscurity here. He has, with remarkable clearness, expressed in words the great truth he had in his mind, *that no man can be justified before God by the deeds of the law*, that is, by anything he can do in the way of obedience to the law; *that the only ground or procuring cause of justification is the vicarious death and perfect righteousness of Christ;*

and that the only way for sinners to obtain justification for themselves, is to exercise faith in Christ. This is the all important truth which the Apostle often affirms, and which he *always* affirms when he has occasion to touch upon the subject. And he never says anything contrary to this.

Now how utterly inconsistent it would be with the manifest design of the Apostle, and the whole train of his reasonings, to say, that while we cannot be justified by the ceremonial law, there is another law, that is, the moral law, by which we may be justified! If ritual observances and those only are excluded, and if we may, after all, be justified by obedience to the moral law; then where is the necessity of a new and living way through the mediation of Christ? And how can it be shown to be impossible for those who are justified, to glory in the presence of God? Paul teaches, that justification by the deeds of the law would frustrate the grace of God. Accordingly he takes care to say, Gal. 2: 21, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness came by the law, then is Christ dead in vain." If he had taught that we can be justified, or have a justifying righteousness, by our own doings, he would have frustrated the grace of God. For salvation by grace is everywhere opposed to salvation by works. In Rom. 9: 30 — 32 the Apostle sets it forth as the fatal mistake of the Jews, that they sought to establish a personal righteousness, or to obtain justification by the works of the law, while believing Gentiles, and believing Jews too, obtained it by faith. Had there been a law, ceremonial or moral, which could give life, then righteousness would have come by that law. The Apostle further says; "To him that worketh" (that is, to him that obtains salvation by working,) "is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not" i. e. for the purpose of justification, "but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." In Rom. 3: 20 — 24 he goes over the same subject. He seems to think he can never say too much to illustrate and confirm this great gospel doctrine. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. But now the righteousness of God without the law is mani-

fest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The reason why the Apostle asserted this doctrine so earnestly, and in so many places, and took so much pains to establish it, was, that the doctrine concerns the whole human race, all being sinners; that it is an essential doctrine in the gospel scheme, showing that salvation is to be obtained not by our own works, but by faith in Christ, our Redeemer. The Apostle had special reason to insist upon this in his instructions to the *Jews*, because they were so prone to rely for justification upon their own works. But he insists upon the same doctrine in regard to the Gentiles. As both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin and condemnation, they can be justified and saved only by grace through the mediation of Christ. And there is always occasion for us to insist upon the doctrine, because men, however guilty, are everywhere inclined to look to their own doings for justification, and to neglect the doctrine of free grace through the blood of Christ.

We have now, I think, reached a certainty in regard to the main point before us, — which is the central point in the scheme of Christianity. Here we find no place for doubt. We do not depend merely upon indirect allusions, or upon implications or inferences, however plain. Our doctrine is directly, and in so many words, *affirmed*. And we are sure we have not mistaken the meaning of the Apostle. For, in the first place, we have to do with the expressions he uses, when he undertakes *professedly* to teach and illustrate the doctrine, and to defend it against opposers. Secondly. His expressions are exceedingly simple, and we clearly see what their sense is, and that it cannot be any other. Thirdly. The general argument of the Apostle and the end he has in view imperiously require the sense we have given to his words. Fourthly. He asserts the doctrine many times, on various occasions, and in different connections. If then human language, used by an inspired teacher, can bring before us any portion of

divine truth, and invest it with the clearness of demonstration, it has done this in the present case; and we are sure that the Apostle meant to teach us this momentous doctrine, namely; *that sinners, such as all men are, cannot be justified by works of obedience to law; that if we are justified, it must be in another and very different way, that is, by grace, or on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, received by faith; and that good works, or works of obedience to the law, however important and indispensable on other accounts in the accomplishment of our salvation, are excluded from any influence as the meritorious ground of our justification before God.*

But when we inquire more particularly into the nature and ground of our justification, no small difficulty arises in making out exactly the meaning of the terms which are employed in Scripture, in religious discourse, and in our Confessions of Faith. In this case as in some others, we may more easily understand the truth itself, than the various modes of speech in which it is conveyed to us. To prepare the way then for clearing the subject of perplexity, I shall first take a more general view of the doctrine itself. Dispensing as far as may be with those terms whose meaning has been obscured by controversy, I shall inquire what are the real blessings which Christ bestows upon his people, and which constitute gospel salvation. This inquiry can be well enough pursued without concerning ourselves at present with the precise meaning of such words as justification, righteousness and imputation, and without crossing the opinions of any candid and devout readers of the Scriptures. I fondly cleave to the idea, that we may exhibit the substance of this gospel truth in such a manner, as will preclude controversy among those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

Now it seems to me exceedingly evident, that the great salvation which Christ procured, and of which all real Christians partake, includes the following blessings; namely;

1. *Forgiveness of sin;* that is, exemption from the punishment involved in the penalty of the law. There is no need of determining now, whether complete forgiveness, that is, complete ex-

emption from the penal consequences of sin takes place at once on believing, or whether it only commences then, and is completed afterwards. All agree, that believers ultimately experience a complete deliverance from all the evils which are threatened for the violation of the divine law; and nothing is more certain, than that this is one of the blessings procured by the merciful agency of the Saviour.

2. The salvation of believers implies *their sanctification*. They are in fact delivered from the bondage of corruption, and made obedient and holy. Without this, they could neither perform the service nor enjoy the blessedness of God's people. Without this, forgiveness itself, in the Scripture sense, would be impossible. For if they remained under the dominion of sin, they would of course suffer the miseries necessarily resulting from the violence of their evil passions, and from the reproaches of their guilty conscience. These inward disorders would entail upon them endless trouble and distress. They would be destitute of all the comforts of religion. The presence and friendship of God they could not enjoy; for a holy God cannot have communion with the unholy. Their own disposition would exclude them from the employments and joys of heaven. They would be a hell to themselves. It must then be that the renewing of the Holy Spirit makes an essential part of gospel salvation. Forgiveness itself presupposes and involves it; inasmuch as the blessings of forgiveness cannot be really enjoyed, nor the evils inherent in a sinful state or consequent upon it avoided, without holiness. At any rate, the salvation which is the portion of believers, does in reality imply deliverance from sin, and restoration to the moral image of God.

3. Salvation involves *perfect happiness*. I mention this distinctly, though implied under the preceding heads. The happiness of believers begins in this life. Their joy is at times unspeakable, and full of glory. But all this is only a foretaste of the perfect and endless blessedness of heaven.

The salvation of believers comprises all the blessings, — all the forms of good above mentioned. They are saved from suffering. They are saved from sin. And they will enjoy complete and

unceasing happiness. These three, though capable of being distinctly considered, are inseparably joined together, and really constitute the great salvation. Whenever one part is mentioned, the other parts are implied. Neither of them could be what it is, without the other. *Forgiveness* could not be to us the unspeakable good signified by the word without *sanctification*. An unsanctified sinner might, indeed, be freed from this and that particular suffering; but he could not be freed from all suffering, nor from that which is most of all dreadful. He would be subject to malignant and tormenting passions and unsatisfied desires; to the reproaches of conscience, to the miseries of a diseased mind, and to the want of the good for which the mind was made. We cannot have complete forgiveness, — that is, complete deliverance from the evil consequences of sin, — without regaining the good which we have lost by sin. Would a Christian feel that he had received the blessings of full forgiveness, while banished from the presence of God, and thus deprived of the enjoyment of the supreme good? But this must necessarily be his lot, while under the dominion of sin. Forgiveness, then, in the large sense in which we have now considered it, is inseparably joined with sanctification and the enjoyment of God here and hereafter.

Or the matter may be stated in another way. The penalty of the law is commonly, and I think justly, considered as implying *temporal, spiritual, and eternal death;* which I understand to be the death of the body, together with bodily disorders and pains; the death of the soul, that is, the withdrawment of God's sanctifying influence, and the consequent and continued cessation of holy affection, or spiritual life; and the endless misery of the future world. These tremendous evils are all involved in the penalty of the law. Now, what is forgiveness but a remission of the penalty, or a removal of the evils involved in the penalty? And what is *complete* forgiveness, but the *full* remission of the *whole* penalty? What is it but freeing believers from temporal, spiritual, and eternal death? And how can they be freed from death, thus understood, without being restored to the opposite life, — the spiritual, happy life which would have been secured to

mankind, had they completely obeyed the divine law, and which, under the *new* dispensation, is secured to those who believe in Christ and obey his gospel?

Or, the views of the subject which I have here suggested, may be otherwise set forth in this way. The condemnation of Adam subjected him to all the evils involved in the penalty of the violated law, that is, *death*. And one of the greatest of these evils was the withdrawal of that divine influence which is the source of spiritual life in the soul. Of course, had he continued under the just condemnation of the law, he would have been forever deprived of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and forever destitute of his holy fruits. But under the gospel dispensation the case is reversed; and the salvation, of which Christ is the Author, implies the removal of all the evil of the threatened death, and the bestowal of the opposite good — a primary and essential part of this being the gift of the renovating and sanctifying Spirit, as the unceasing spring of a new and holy life in the soul, connected with the free remission of the merited punishment, and the endless enjoyment of the blessedness of Christ's kingdom.

Let us come now to the particular subject of *justification*. And here we shall see at once, that justification implies complete forgiveness. So it is represented, Romans iv, The Apostle is treating particularly of justification. Verse 5, "To him that worketh not, but that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" that is, he is justified. The Apostle then proceeds thus, verses 6—8, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works; saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Here we learn that God's not imputing sin and his imputing righteousness, is the same as forgiving or covering sin. And this we understand to be the remission of the penalty for disobedience, or the taking away of the evils involved in the penalty, as above explained. Our doctrine, then, would stand in this form. *Believers are justified not by their own works, but on the ground of*

what Christ has done for them. The penalty of the law, including temporal, spiritual, and eternal death, is removed, and a restoration to the opposite life granted, through the mediation of Christ. He bestows upon believers a *complete salvation;* exemption from evil, natural and moral, and the enjoyment of the highest good of which they are capable. Now it is very plain that salvation, in this comprehensive, Scriptural sense, is not the *reward* or the *consequence* of our own obedience or holiness; for our holiness, our sanctification by the Spirit, is a part of this great salvation. Christ came to "redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." If we are delivered from the bondage of corruption, it is he that has delivered us. If we are restored to the moral image of God, it is he that has restored us. If we have faithfully served God in the performance of good works, we must each one say, as the Apostle said, after doing so much more than we have done, "Not I, but the grace of Christ which was with me." All good in our hearts and lives must be ascribed to Christ, as a part of the salvation of which he is the Author. In our natural state, we are the children of disobedience. If we are brought to obey, it is because Christ has turned us from sin and written his law upon our hearts. The beginning and the continuance of holy obedience is from Christ, as much as deliverance from the wrath to come, or the enjoyment of heavenly felicity.

As to our works — suppose them to be good, yea, perfectly good, as they will finally be, and to be continued for ever so long a time; still, as has already been shown, we are not thereby entitled, on the ground of law, to the favor of God. Imperfect obedience, and even a return from disobedience to *perfect* obedience, does not by any means constitute the legal condition of life. On the ground of God's righteous law as the rule of his administration, no one who has sinned, whatever may be his subsequent conduct, can have any personal claim to life, as a matter of justice. If any one of our race is saved, it must be of grace. He does not merit salvation by his works, but receives it as a free gift. Christ then is, in the fullest sense, the Author of our salva-

tion. Every part of it comes from him. "He is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." Our *justification*, whether it is considered as including the whole of salvation or a part of it, is altogether of grace. If it is considered as denoting mere forgiveness, or deliverance from penal suffering, in the limited sense, or if understood in the large and comprehensive sense, including not only deliverance from penal suffering, but restoration to the image and favor of God and the happiness of his kingdom; the result is one and the same. Justification, taken in either way, is not and cannot be *of works*. It does not come to us on the ground of our obedience. Though our works may be good in themselves, and approved of God, and though they may be multiplied to any conceivable extent, they do not constitute, in whole or in part, the *meritorious cause of our justification*.

LECTURE CI.

NATURE AND GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

THE subject before us is so important, and in some respects attended with so many difficulties, that it requires statements and explanations still more particular and exact than those which were given in the last Lecture. Even repetitions will be deemed pardonable, if they may contribute to cast a clearer light on the doctrine under consideration, or to give it a more deep and enduring impression on the heart.

The word justification is *forensic;* in other words, it is taken from the proceedings of courts of justice. A man is accused of a crime. The charge against him is examined, and he is found to be not guilty. Of course he is regarded as an innocent, blameless man, and enjoys the privileges of an unoffending, upright member of the community. Such a man is justified in the literal sense. And here we see the only way in which a man, charged with a crime before a judicial court, can escape punishment and enjoy the privileges of a citizen. It must be made to appear that he is falsely accused, and the suit against him must be issued in his favor, and he must in this way stand justified before the court and before the public.

But human beings can never be justified before God in such a way as this. They are all charged with transgressing the divine law. The charge is true, and is proved to be true, and they are guilty and under condemnation. Now in what sense can such persons — persons known and acknowledged to be transgressors —

be justified before God? In other words, what is justification in the gospel sense?

Here it is not to be supposed that God mistakes the character of men, thinking them to be innocent, while they are guilty; that he judges and declares those who are transgressors, not to be transgressors. On the contrary, God often declares men to be transgressors — sinners without excuse, and deserving of condemnation. His justifying them must, then, be in another and very different sense. The question is, in what sense? I answer, it must be in a secondary or figurative sense. There is a real, though imperfect analogy, between justification in the literal or legal sense and justification in the gospel sense; and the language of Scripture, to which we have so often referred, is founded on this analogy. When God is said to justify the ungodly, the meaning must be, that he treats them and bestows favors upon them *as though they were not ungodly*, or as though they had always been obedient. He passes by their sins, he does not remember them, he blots them out; so that they do not prevent the bestowment of his favors. He exercises his kindness towards them, adopts them as his children, and admits them to the joys of his kingdom, *as though they had never sinned.* Some say, he *regards them or looks upon them as innocent*, or *righteous.* But their meaning must be, that while he knows them to be sinners, he does not doom them to suffer the penalty of sin, but treats them *as though* they were free from sin. If we say, he *pronounces* them to be *just* or *righteous;* our meaning is not, that he falls into a mistake, and thinks them and declares them not guilty when in truth they are guilty; but that he exempts them from punishment and confers upon them the blessings of his love, as really as he would do if they had never sinned. Such, according to my understanding, is gospel justification. It is a gracious proceeding, wherein God freely pardons all our sins and accepts and treats us as righteous persons — not that we ourselves have, in his judgment, the personal righteousness required by the law, but that on some other account he accepts and blesses us, *as though we had it.*

Still justification does not imply, that God treats believers and bestows blessings upon them *exactly* in the same manner, or, at present, *in the same degree*, as he would have done had they been perfectly obedient. For the measure of present good which he confers upon them must conform to their present character, and their present capacity for enjoyment; and, as they are subject to so many faults, his manner of treating them must be such as will administer the necessary discipline. When God calls his people to endure suffering, or, as it is often expressed, chastens them, or inflicts punishment upon them, he does not do it *as an execution of the penalty of the law;* for the penalty is really remitted. They are truly pardoned. But, though pardoned, they are at present incapable of receiving precisely and in all respects the same treatment from God, as if they were without sin. The exact truth is, he now treats them *substantially* as though they possessed a complete personal righteousness; and will finally give them the enjoyment of that good which was promised as the reward of unceasing obedience — the highest blessedness of those who have never offended. If a prodigal son, who repents and returns to his home, possesses less capacity for enjoyment than he would have possessed had he never gone astray; then, though he is fully pardoned and restored to favor, he cannot at once enjoy the same degree of happiness as though his faculties had not been injured by vice. If he has the remains of that ignorance and bodily disease which resulted from his wicked conduct, his father will put him, for his benefit, under the care of a skilful physician and a faithful teacher. And though some of the medicines administered to him may be unpleasant to his taste, and some of the lessons assigned to him hard to be learned, still they all come from paternal kindness, and do by no means interfere with his entire forgiveness, or his title to a full inheritance in his father's estate. I present this case to illustrate the propriety of the remark, that God does not treat penitent sinners, *exactly and in all respects*, as though they were, and always had been, wholly free from sin. But for ordinary purposes, it is sufficiently correct to say, he accepts and treats them as though they had never

offended, or as though they were themselves righteous. In truth, they could not be treated with more favor; they could not receive more abundant fruits of God's love, if they had never offended. Indeed it is plainly implied in the parable of the prodigal son, and in other parts of Scripture, that God will bestow upon his redeemed and penitent people some special favors, — favors which will distinguish them above those who have never sinned.

The account I have now given of justification is sufficiently sustained by that remarkable passage in Romans iv, which has been already quoted. The Apostle speaks of God as justifying him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly; and then refers to a passage in Psalm 32, in which this same matter of justifying the believer, or counting his faith for righteousness, is set forth in another way. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God *imputeth righteousness without works;* saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is evident, that *forgiving sin* and *not imputing sin* are expressions of the same import; and the Apostle quotes them from David, to show the blessed state of those who are justified. But we cannot conclude from this, that justification includes no more than forgiveness, in the restricted sense. The quotation is pertinent, and answers the purpose of the Apostle, if forgiveness, or not imputing sin, is considered as not only an essential part of justification, but as inseparably connected with all the other parts, or as including all the blessings of salvation.

It has been made a question, whether justification is, as our Catechism expresses it, an *act* of God's grace, or whether it is not a mere fact, revealed to us by the word of God? But in my view there is no difficulty here. Justification is, indeed, a *fact* made known by *revelation*. God declares to us the truth, that those who believe are forgiven and accepted. Accordingly, as soon as sinners believe, they are pardoned and entitled to eternal life. But this happy state of believers, which God thus plainly *declares*, is also a matter in which his *agency* is concerned. For

he not only declares believers to be in a justified state, but he in fact brings them into that state, and then at once *acts* graciously towards them, in bestowing upon them the blessings of justification, and granting them the tokens and fruits of his Fatherly love. There is then a declaration of God in his word that believers are justified, and a corresponding *act* of his grace in his dispensations — a merciful agency towards them who believe, extending through their whole happy existence.

Having thus endeavored to show what justification is, I shall next inquire more particularly what is the *ground* of it, — what is the special *consideration* or *reason*, on account of which God justifies believers. I refer to the *primary* ground, the *meritorious* condition — implying a real worthiness or just desert of the good bestowed.

We have already seen that the Apostle Paul, who handles this subject of set purpose, and with great particularity and clearness, declares again and again, that we are not justified by works. "By grace ye are saved;" and salvation must surely include *justification:* "Not of works, lest any man should boast." He says this to *Gentiles* as well as Jews; so that works cannot mean merely an observance of the ritual law of Moses. For who could think it necessary to guard *Gentiles* against boasting on account of their having conformed to Jewish rites? The Apostle manifestly excludes works of every kind, whether before or after repentance, from being the meritorious ground of *justification.* The *grace* by which we are justified and saved, is *unmerited favor.* The Apostle teaches this as clearly and fully as language can teach it. What then is the true *ground* or meritorious condition of justification? Are sinners pardoned and saved on account of any personal righteousness which they possess? This the Apostle strongly denies, and this the enlightened conscience of every Christian denies. According to the teachings of revelation, the ground, the meritorious condition of our justification is the mediatorial work of Christ, including his humiliation, his obedience and death, or "his obedience unto death." Rom. 5: 9, "We were recon-

ciled to God by the death of his Son;" that is, God's wrath was turned away, and his favor procured by Christ's death. In the latter part of the chapter, the Apostle treats the subject very particularly and with great clearness and earnestness. "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." — "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. 10: 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Remission of sins is often declared to be through or by the death or the blood of Christ. And remission is justification, or an essential part of it. According to our Catechism, "Justification is an act of God's grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us."

Some of our best writers, in treating of justification, insist upon the distinction between the *active* and the *passive* obedience of Christ, and ascribe our forgiveness to his passive obedience, or his sufferings, and our acceptance and eternal life to his active obedience, or his conformity with the moral law. But what if it should be found that the obedience of Christ, spoken of in Rom. 5: 19 and in other places, signifies his obedience unto death, thus including his atoning sacrifice? And what if it should be found too, that forgiveness of sin, as spoken of in the New Testament, generally includes all the blessings of grace? It seems to me that we shall more exactly conform to the example of the sacred writers, and more fully secure the efficacy of gospel truth, if we sometimes speak of the work of our Redeemer as one whole, and our salvation as a whole, and at other times speak of particular parts of his work, for example, of his incarnation, his obedience to the moral and the ceremonial law, and to the special command of the Father that he should lay down his life for his people, his sufferings in general, particularly in the garden and on the cross, his death, his blood, his sacrifice, just as the occasion renders suitable, still considering each of these not as really separate from the others, but as connected with them, and as actually implying them.

The mediatorial work of Christ, I have said, is the *ground* or

meritorious condition or *cause* of our forgiveness and acceptance with God. This gospel doctrine may be illustrated in different ways, all however leading to the same result. It may be illustrated thus. Our perfect obedience would, according to the law, be the ground of our acceptance with God and our enjoyment of blessedness in his kingdom. This ground of acceptance is wanting. But the obedience and death of our Redeemer come in the place of it; and on this ground we enjoy the same favor of God, and the same blessedness, as we should have done on the ground of our own obedience. This new ground of our acceptance with God is substituted for what was originally appointed to be the ground of it according to the tenor of the law.

But our doctrine may be set forth in another form. Our sin had put a bar in the way of our salvation. Divine law and justice excluded us from heaven, and our own character rendered us incapable of enjoying it. But Christ, by his work as Redeemer, has satisfied law and justice, and thus opened the way for our forgiveness, and for a sanctifying influence to come from above to make us holy, and so to prepare us for a holy salvation. Jesus was set forth as a propitiation — that God might be just, and the justifier of believers. It is on the ground of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, that God can save sinners in harmony with his justice. This propitiatory sacrifice is the foundation, the essential, meritorious condition of our justification. We have no personal worthiness, no legal merit. But we can rely on the all-sufficient merits of Christ crucified, as the ground of our forgiveness and eternal life.

I have spoken so repeatedly and so guardedly respecting this ground or condition of our forgiveness and acceptance, because there are other things mentioned in Scripture as conditions of our forgiveness — conditions, it is true, of a very different nature, but still necessary to our salvation — as really necessary as the death of Christ, though on very different accounts and in a very different way. *The death of Christ* is a necessary condition of our salvation, because we have sinned, and the righteousness or justice of God must be declared, and his law vindicated, in order to

our forgiveness. If God should pardon sinners without the shedding of Christ's blood, his character, as moral Governor, could not appear in a true and honorable light. But the other things referred to — our repentance, faith and obedience, are conditions of another kind — conditions rendered necessary on different accounts. Logicians call each of these *conditio sine qua non;* a condition without which the good contemplated cannot be enjoyed. Thus the unholy cannot enjoy a holy salvation. And their becoming holy is a condition without which they cannot be saved. A compliance with this condition is absolutely necessary. Infinite grace cannot save us without it.

When I speak of conditions of different kinds, I say nothing which is new, and nothing which is of rare occurrence. In numberless cases, the attainment of a particular end depends on various conditions, some of which are primary, and some secondary. The relations of these conditions to the end sought, though equally real and necessary, are very different in their nature. One is a condition in one sense, and *in that sense* it may be *the only condition*, and may properly be spoken of *as excluding all other conditions*, that is, excluding all other things from being conditions in the sense in which this is a condition. This, which is an important point, may be illustrated by the following example. A man is, for a particular offence, sentenced to pay a fine of a thousand dollars, or to be imprisoned for ten years. After he has been imprisoned for a time, a friend of his pays the fine, and so fulfils the chief condition, and the *only pecuniary* condition of his liberation; I say, the *only pecuniary* condition, because no more money is required. But there may be other conditions of a different kind. The laws may require bonds to be given for the good behavior of the prisoner: and this condition may also be complied with. These two conditions may be fulfilled by other men. But there may be other conditions which can be fulfilled by no one but himself. For he may be required to make and subscribe a promise that he will be obedient to the laws. His compliance with this condition would also be indispensable. And there is still another condition, namely, that in order to enjoy the benefit of liberation from prison, the

door of which may now be opened to him, he must accept the benefit, and actually go out from his confinement. This last condition, arising from the nature of the case, is as indispensable as the others, but for a different reason. The others were made indispensable by the authority of the laws, and the decision of the government. *This* is indispensable from the nature of the case. The liberation of the prisoner could not on any supposition take place without it. The payment of the fine would be the *special, primary* condition, and might properly be called the *pecuniary ground* or the *procuring cause* of the liberation. It would be the only pecuniary consideration on account of which the favor could be granted, and on account of which the other conditions mentioned could have any place, or avail anything if complied with. Still, they are all necessary conditions.

I pretend not that this example can answer all the purposes aimed at. But it is sufficient to show that there may be a *ground*, or an *essential, prominent condition*, which, in the sense in which it is a condition, excludes all other conditions. That is, *nothing else is a condition in the same sense with this.* It is, I apprehend, in this way that the Apostle Paul speaks respecting justification, the drift of his discourse showing clearly the meaning of his words. His object is to set forth the real state of man as a transgressor, and the way opened for his salvation by the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. Accordingly, he says, our salvation is not by works of righteousness which we have done. The law promised life on the ground of our unfailing obedience. But we are excluded from the benefit of this promise by our sins. The Apostle then describes the other method of justification by the blood of Christ, or by his righteousness, or his grace. Our works are excluded. They can have no influence in the sense in which the mediation of Christ has influence. Previously to our faith and justification, we have no good works; and if we had, they could not be the ground of our justification, unless they were perfect through our whole life; which would be inconsistent with our being sinners. Our justification is then *of grace, not of works* — not for our righteousness, but for the righteousness of Christ.

We have no good works before we are brought into a spiritual union with Christ. And the works which we do after that union cannot be the ground of our justification, because, though in a measure right, and so far as right, acceptable to God, they are not *perfectly right*, and do not now and never can, constitute the obedience which the law of works demands. The way of life then by works is forever closed up. And we see with what good reason the Apostle says absolutely, our justification is *not of works*. However necessary they may be, and whatever their importance *in other respects, they have no place here.* We are saved *by the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ alone — by grace alone* — or, which we shall find to be the same thing, *by faith alone.*

It should be fixed in our minds as a point of great importance, that nothing else has any such influence in our justification, as the death, the atonement, or the righteousness of Christ; that his work as Redeemer does, alone, form *the perfect, meritorious condition*, or *ground of our justification before God*, nothing else being needed or admitted as a condition, or any part of a condition, *in that respect.* This, I think, is the very thing which the Apostle had in his mind, when he so decidedly excluded works from having any share in our justification. And it is certain that he did this very properly, with his particular view and for his specific purpose, although in other views of the subject and for other purposes, several other things are indispensable as conditions of forgiveness and salvation. Those other things, I say, are really indispensable; and the sacred writers would have omitted an important truth, if they had not declared this. But no other truth interferes with that foundation principle of Paul, that we are justified freely by grace through the redemption of Christ, and not at all by our works. From Paul's point of view, it was obviously so. In his circumstances, and for the accomplishment of his great object, truth required him to speak as he did. He was called to establish the doctrine, which lay at the foundation of the gospel scheme, in opposition to the errors of those who went about to establish a justifying righteousness of their own. But when

circumstances led him to look at Christianity from a different point of view, and to confute errors of a different kind, he was equally prompt and earnest in asserting other truths. For he never entertained the preposterous idea, that any single truth, however important, constitutes Christianity.

In the treatment of this subject my aim is to conform exactly to the word of God, teaching the doctrines which the inspired writers teach, and *as* they teach them. When I undertake to show what is the meritorious condition or procuring cause of our justification, I follow Paul, and looking at the subject from his point of view, I assert what he asserted, that we are pardoned and accepted not for our righteousness, but on account of the perfect righteousness of Christ — on this account *wholly*, our works being excluded. This is the great gospel truth which Paul was inspired to teach, and which, in various parts of his writings, he did very plainly teach, though without displacing or marring any other truth. But at other times he as plainly taught different truths, knowing that, whatever ignorant or hasty readers might imagine, there was no contradiction. In this we should copy his example. There is no other way of doing justice to the sacred writers. We must endeavor to place ourselves in their circumstances, and to get the views which they had in their minds, and which they uttered so freely and so artlessly, and which they always seemed to expect that their readers would candidly consider and rightly understand. Following them in their manner of teaching, we say of a particular doctrine, as the doctrine of gratuitous justification, it is the truth, and in the point of view intended, the only truth, everything else being excluded. By and by, when there is occasion for it, we teach something else with the same freedom, something which we know to be a truth, but which would contradict the truths before taught, if held forth from the same stand-point and in the same connection; although, being held forth from a different stand-point, and in a different connection, it perfectly harmonizes with every other truth. Thus we say that we are not forgiven and saved for our works — that works are excluded. And then in another view, we say, that

works of obedience are absolutely necessary — that we cannot be pardoned and saved without them, any more than we can without the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. But we shall say more on this point in the sequel.

Have we not now arrived at a satisfactory idea of what it is to be *justified freely by the grace of God*, as we are said to be, Rom. 3: 24? Justification is here put in opposition to justification by works. God does not justify us for having complied with the holy requirements of the law, for this we have not done. He does not justify us on account of a personal worthiness, for this we do not possess. But he justifies us *freely, by his grace.* It is an unmerited gift. It comes from his sovereign love. The gift of a Saviour — the provision of an expiatory sacrifice — all that was done preparatory to salvation, resulted from the infinite benignity and grace of God. He adopted the plan of redemption, because he "so loved the world." And he carries out the work of redemption in our renewal, our forgiveness, and acceptance, from the same benevolent motives. Our justification is the result of a previous work of grace, and it is itself a work of grace. We do nothing to deserve it. This unspeakable good is bestowed upon us "without money and without price." From first to last, salvation is all of grace.

But some may ask — how is it a *free gift*, a blessing *gratuitously bestowed*, if Christ paid the full price of our redemption, and purchased our life by his own painful death?

I answer, first; salvation is a free gift to *us*, inasmuch as *we* have done nothing to purchase it. The price of our redemption was the precious blood of Jesus Christ. No atonement for sin has been made, and none could be made, by us. On our part, all is depravity and guilt. On his part, all is love and mercy. So that the good which we receive, in whatever way procured, is to us an unmerited favor. It is all of grace.

I answer, secondly; the Apostle taught, Rom. 3: 24, that we are justified *freely* by God's *grace*, and yet that it is through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. He taught both these

truths here in the same sentence; and at other times he taught them in different passages. And it is clear that, as they lay in his mind, they were perfectly consistent. So that he readily asserted one or the other of them, or both together, just as he had occasion to do. If, then, we have any confidence in his divine inspiration, or even in his logical discernment, we must believe both the doctrine of justification by grace, and the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, and must plainly declare them both, whether we can by our own reason reconcile them with each other or not.

I answer, thirdly; if you find it difficult to make out the consistency of the two doctrines, can you show them to be *incon sistent?* May it not be true that Christ died for our sins, and still that salvation is of grace? Pecuniary transactions are referred to in Scripture to illustrate the atonement. We are *bought* with a *price.* We are *redeemed* by the blood of Christ. But the language is figurative. Pecuniary or commercial transactions are used to represent what is moral and spiritual. Keep this in mind, and the difficulty will vanish. For in truth, what is there in God's giving his Son to die for us, incompatible with our being justified freely by his grace? The work of Christ did not take away the *ill desert* of sin or of sinners, but manifested it more clearly. It did not make us *personally worthy* of God's favor, but showed our unworthiness. The curse of the law was indeed substantially borne, and justice satisfied, by the Saviour. But that redounds to *his* merit, not to *ours.* We receive infinite good from the work which Christ performed for us; but of all that good we are personally unworthy. This is all made clear by the consciousness of Christians. They are saved through the atoning sacrifice of Christ; and yet they know and feel that their salvation is wholly of grace.

But fourthly, I must say one thing more; namely, that *God's grace, in our forgiveness and salvation, is made to appear most conspicuous and glorious by means of that very atonement of Christ which is said to be incompatible with it.* This is plainly taught in the Scriptures. The Apostle, Romans v, particularly

sets forth the method of our justification through the death of Christ, and celebrates it as a work of grace. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness" — (not our righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, verse 18) — "unto eternal life." The free grace of God in our salvation shines with overpowering splendor in the work of redemption by Christ. "Herein is love," said one who had been taught by truth itself — "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us." In this mission of Christ, divine grace came forth to the view of heaven and earth in its highest glory. And our actual forgiveness and salvation is but the result of the love and grace manifested in the gift of Christ, and in his humiliation and death. How strange then it is, yea, what violent perversion of the truth, to represent that which most illustriously displays the grace of God, to be inconsistent with it! It is known to believers in this life, and will be known more fully in eternity, that God's justifying and saving them through the propitiatory death of Christ, is "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

If I mistake not, we have satisfactorily reached the following conclusions; namely, the love or grace of God is the original cause or spring of our salvation. In the exercise of that love he sent his Son to be our Redeemer. The obedience and death of Christ opened the door for the exercise of mercy towards us, and procured salvation for sinners. His finished righteousness, or the merit of his obedience unto death, is the proper ground, and the only meritorious ground, of our justification; and that justification, like the mission and death of Christ from which it resulted, is entirely a work of grace.

But there is, as we have seen, another view to be taken of the subject. The expiatory sacrifice, the all sufficient atonement of Christ is not all that is necessary to our forgiveness. Something is required on *our* part. There are conditions with which we must comply, in order to enjoy the good procured for us. These several conditions are set before us in the word of God. We are

required to *repent* and *be converted*, that we may be forgiven. Luke 13: 3; Acts 2: 38; 3: 19; Ezek. 18: 30; Isa. 55: 7. These passages, and others which might be cited, are exceedingly plain. *Faith* is also laid down as a condition of justification and eternal life. We must believe in the Lord Jesus, that we may be saved. We are justified by faith. The same as to *prayer*. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." A spirit of *forgiveness* is declared to be a condition of our being forgiven of God. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not, neither shall ye be forgiven." The same is true of *obedience*. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." I might mention other exercises of piety, which are set forth in Scripture as conditions of our forgiveness and eternal life; as means which are indispensable on our part, if we would be partakers of salvation.

But when we take a careful and connected view of the teachings of holy writ on this subject, we become satisfied that none of the things above mentioned are conditions of forgiveness and eternal life, in the same sense with the atoning sacrifice of Christ. That was a condition on God's part — a measure which was necessary to prepare the way for our salvation — a measure required, in order that God might be just while he justifies them that believe. But the other conditions mentioned are necessary on *our* part. Christ has opened the door of heaven; but *we* must enter in, or we cannot enjoy heaven. He has procured and offered an infinite good. But how can it avail to our benefit, unless we receive it? "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." Now these duties, which are required of us as conditions of salvation, are in no degree less necessary because Christ has performed the antecedent and meritorious condition for us. His atonement, his righteousness, which is presupposed, instead of superseding our agency in repenting and believing, is the very thing which secures that agency, and renders it effectual to our salvation.

If you still inquire more particularly why repentance, faith, and holiness are to be regarded as indispensable conditions of our salvation, my answer is two-fold.

First. God himself has appointed them, and required them as conditions of salvation. And we know that all his appointments and requisitions are holy, just and good.

Secondly. The nature of the case shows that these conditions are necessary. Salvation is holy, and cannot belong to the unholy; as the Scripture says, "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." God is a Being of infinite purity; and we must be pure in heart in order to enjoy him. Our Saviour sustains various offices. He is a Prophet; but he becomes a Prophet to us, only when our hearts are opened to receive his instructions. He is a Priest; and he becomes a Priest to us by our trusting in his all-sufficient sacrifice. He is a King; and he becomes our King by our submitting heartily to his dominion and obeying his laws. He is proffered to us as an unspeakable gift; but how can a gift be ours unless we receive it? The conditions, then, which are required of us by the authority of God, are, from the very nature of the case, obviously necessary to our salvation.

But we here meet another question, and one attended with more serious difficulties. Repentance, faith, prayer, and obedience are, we have seen, all necessary, though not meritorious conditions of our justification. But the Scriptures evidently distinguish one of these conditions above the others. They are all equally fruits of the Spirit; but *faith* is particularized as having a concern in our justification, which belongs not to any of the other conditions. What is the reason of this? How is it to be accounted for, that faith is spoken of in the word of God as having this peculiar influence in the affair of our justification?

Now if we should be utterly unable to show *why* faith is thus distinguished from other virtues, in regard to our justification, the fact, that it is thus distinguished by the inspired writers, is sufficient to settle our belief. It is certain that the Scriptures do, in various places, attribute to faith this peculiar, this prominent influence. The Old Testament declares, that Abraham *believed* God,

and it was counted to him for righteousness. But where does it declare that Abraham, or any other man, repented, or prayed, or did any other duty, and it was counted to him for righteousness? Paul says repeatedly that we are justified *by faith*. But where does he say we are justified by any other virtuous exercise? He declares, indeed, that the doers of the law shall be justified. But he does not say they shall be justified *for* doing the law, or *by* doing it. On the contrary, he often declares that justification is not by the deeds of the law, but that it is by faith, that it may be of grace. Such is the doctrine of the great Apostle. Now if we should find that, after our best endeavors, we can obtain no clear insight into the *rationale* of the doctrine; still, its being taught by inspired writers is a sufficient foundation for our belief. We must have implicit confidence in their instructions, expecting further light in time to come.

But, without pretending to an adequate understanding of the subject now under discussion, I cannot but think that several things relative to it are sufficiently evident.

It is evident, that the difference between faith and the other Christian virtues, in regard to justification, does not arise from any real difference among them as to their *moral nature*. It might, at first view, be natural enough to suppose, that faith is thus distinguished above all other things required of us, because of some superior excellence which is inherent in it. But this cannot be the case. For what can be more excellent than *love*, which is the fulfilling of the law, and which Paul places above both faith and hope? And most certainly it cannot be, as some have strangely supposed, that God has assigned to faith such a peculiar influence in our justification, because it is *destitute of* moral excellence. We are taught by our Saviour, that faith is the great work which is required of us by God. "What shall we do," said some, "that we may work the work of God? Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Why is not this special work of God, this obedience to the great requirement of the gospel, an act of holiness, as much as obedience to any divine requirement? If it is

not an act of holiness, it would be passing strange that God should bestow such special honor upon it. My argument on the subject is, you see, very plain and very concise. If it were the *holiness* of faith which gives it such influence in our justification, then why does not the holiness of love, and other acts of obedience, give them the same influence? On the other hand, it is exceedingly absurd to suppose that God gives such special influence to faith because it does not partake of the nature of holiness. Our conclusion is, that the word of God does not ascribe such a peculiar influence to faith, either because it is in itself possessed of moral excellence, or because it is not; *but for some other reason. What is that reason? And how does it come to pass, that, to be justified by grace, we must be justified by faith?* I hope by the following suggestions to contribute something towards a satisfactory solution of this inquiry.

There are, we have seen, only two ways of justification spoken of in Scripture; two ways in which we can obtain the favor of God; one, by perfect obedience to the law; the other, by the free mercy of God through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. From the first of these ways we are evidently excluded. We must, then, resort to the other. And as that is made known to us by the gospel revelation, it calls for our consideration and our faith. What we have to do as sinners is, to understand and receive the gospel. And as the gospel proclaims *salvation by grace*, to receive it is, in reality, to *receive* salvation by grace. And this is the same as to exercise *evangelical faith*. Cordially to believe the gospel, is to understand and embrace what it declares. And as it declares that Christ is the only Saviour, in the exercise of faith we receive him and trust in him as such, giving up all thought of being saved in any other way. It appears, then, from the very nature of the gospel, that to be saved by faith is to be saved by grace; for faith is *receiving* salvation by grace. If the gospel revealed another way of salvation, believing the gospel would be another thing, and being saved by faith would be another thing. Faith derives its character, it becomes what it is, from the real nature of the gospel scheme which it receives.

And salvation by faith becomes what it is, that is, a *gratuitous, free salvation*, because this is the salvation which is offered in the gospel, and which faith receives. A faith which looked any other way, and reached after any other salvation, would not be gospel faith. If you have true faith, you think and feel in correspondence with gospel-truth. You trust in Christ as he is set forth in the gospel; and he is set forth as a complete Saviour and the only Saviour; and you receive pardon and life as it is offered, and it is offered as a free gift. Accordingly, to receive justification *by faith* is to receive it as *a matter* of *grace*, a *free gift*, inasmuch as this is the only justification which is made known in the gospel, and the only justification which faith can receive. It appears then from the very nature of the gospel and from the corresponding nature of faith, that to *be justified by faith* is, as the Apostle teaches, to be *justified by grace.* Faith is not true faith, unless it thus falls in and harmonizes with the gospel scheme.

If now you ask why we are justified by *faith*, I answer, because there is no possible way for sinners to be justified but *by grace*, and there is no other way to be justified *by grace*, but to be justified *by faith.* To suppose that you can be pardoned and saved by grace, in any way but to be pardoned and saved by faith, is as absurd as to suppose that you can *have* salvation without *receiving* it — or that you can *have* it *without* having it. For it is clear, that you cannot become possessed of a good, of which you are destitute, without receiving it. So long as you refuse a blessing, the blessing is not yours. In this way you may be satisfied why God makes *faith* the special means of securing salvation. If a man is an unbeliever, salvation cannot be his, unless he can *possess* it while he *rejects* it.

Look at a man justly condemned for a crime which he has committed, to suffer perpetual imprisonment. It is clear that he cannot obtain deliverance from this punishment by proving his innocence, or by any service he can perform. But suppose the chief magistrate sends a messenger to him with the offer of a free pardon and immediate liberation from his confinement. Now if no condition is expressed, one is implied. For the prisoner will

remain in his cell, unless he gives credit to the report of the messenger and is willing to accept the offer of liberation which he brings. Suppose he does this. I ask, how was this prisoner liberated? And the answer may be given in two ways. First, it may be said he was pardoned and liberated by an act of mercy in the magistrate. Secondly, it may be said, he was liberated merely by crediting the message sent him and accepting the proffered deliverance, this being all that was necessary on his part. And these answers are both true, and both amount to the same thing. Each implies the other.

But let the case be varied. Suppose the prisoner confined for a heavy debt he has contracted by wasting the property of his employer. And suppose his employer, to whom he owes so much, sends a messenger with an offer to liberate him a year hence, on condition of his doing work enough to pay a part of the debt, and giving bonds for the final payment of the rest. The prisoner believes the sincerity of his creditor, accepts his offer, fulfils the conditions, and is liberated. Now this man obtains his liberation not by an act of compassion or generosity, not as a gratuity, but by such services and additional sureties, as satisfy the claims of his creditor.

Apply this to our subject. Had the gospel message required services or sufferings of us sufficient to discharge our obligations to divine justice, as the condition of being restored to divine favor, and were we able to fulful the condition; our believing and accepting *such* a message would be a very different thing from gospel faith — as different as such a message is from the gospel message; and our salvation coming in this way would be a very different thing from gospel salvation. It would not be by *grace*, but by our own services or sufferings.

I am so desirous of showing as clearly as possible why the Scripture declares that we are justified *by grace*, and still that we are justified *by faith*, that I will venture to give one more illustration; though it may appear like attempting to make that which is already sufficiently plain, still plainer.

Take then the case of a man, who has no possible way to pro-

vide for himself but by begging. Of such a man we say, *he lives by begging. He supports himself by asking alms.* Now what is the difference between saying, he lives *by begging*, and saying, he lives by *charity;* or between saying, he is supported by *asking alms*, and saying, he is supported by *the alms* which he *receives?* So with believers. They have no resources of their own, and they depend wholly on the favor of their Redeemer. They are justified and saved *by his grace*, and they are justified and saved *by trusting* in his grace.

LECTURE CII.

NATURE OF JUSTIFYING FAITH. IMPUTATION.

I HAVE repeatedly spoken of the *nature of faith.* But the subject deserves a more particular and distinct consideration.

What then is that faith in Christ, or in the gospel, which is the means of justification; or which secures forgiveness of sin and acceptance with God?

Here the natural presumption is, that an act or exercise which God so particularly requires of us, and which he has made the special means or condition of justification, must be a holy exercise — an exercise possessing true moral excellence. Otherwise, why should he so particularly require it? And why should he put such a mark of favor upon it, as to promise salvation to those who exercise it?

Again. Justifying faith has a particular respect to Christ in his true character. It receives him and relies upon him as a holy Saviour, — which plainly implies a love to holiness. Faith receives Christ as a friend and vindicator of the divine law, and so implies a love to that law. The end of faith, the good which it aims at, is a holy salvation — a deliverance not only from the penal consequences of sin, but from its polluting influence within the mind. Desire for such a salvation is a holy desire — an attachment to a holy object.

Consider too the influence of faith in Christ — the effects which it produces. It purifies the heart. It overcomes the world. It produces good works. It leads to progressive sanctification. Now

it cannot be, that an exercise or state of mind which is productive of such excellent fruits, is itself destitute of excellence.

The Apostle John expressly declares, that he who believes is *born of God;* which shows, that the exercise of faith is a certain evidence of regeneration, true faith being found only in the regenerate. And James teaches that a faith which is separate from obedience is not justifying faith. True faith works by love; and love involves obedience. Love is itself obedience to the first and great command, and leads to universal obedience. "He that loveth me, keepeth my commands."

There are indeed various exercises of unconverted men which are called faith. Those who are without holiness may believe the mere facts of the gospel history, just as they believe the facts of any other history. They may have a speculative knowledge of the truths which the Scriptures reveal, and a faith corresponding with that knowledge. Men destitute of godliness may believe, that Jesus was born, and wrought miracles, and suffered and died for sinners; that he will forgive the offences of his followers, and make them happy in heaven. These and other truths of revelation are speculatively known and believed by multitudes who are strangers to holiness. But they do not discern these things *spiritually.* They do not see their true nature, their importance, their moral beauty and excellence. And they do not believe them otherwise than as they see and understand them. Of course, they do not believe in their true importance, excellence and glory.

In saving faith the act of the mind may be considered as *complex.* The mind itself is complex in regard to its faculties and operations. It is an intellectual or knowing agent, and it is a moral agent. The power of the mind to put forth acts which are of different kinds, or which stand in different relations, has given rise to the division of the mind into different faculties. The most general classification of these faculties is into the *intellectual* and *moral.* In the exercise of its intellectual faculty, the mind looks at things of a merely intellectual nature, as the principles of mathematics; or at things of a moral nature considered in a merely intellectual light. Moral and spiritual things may be ob-

jects both of intellectual discernment and of moral affection; and the mind may put forth an act which shall relate to them in both respects. The act may be one, but it may relate to the objects in different points of view, and so may be both intellectual and moral. Here the complexness of the act is to be resolved into its bearing upon the same object in different respects, — in other words, upon different aspects of the object. The mind acts *intellectually* — it apprehends the object; and it acts *morally*, that is, it is pleased with the object — it loves what it perceives. And the mind may be in such a state that it loves a holy object as soon as it sees it — in such a state that it cannot see without loving; and most certainly it cannot love without seeing. In the language of logicians, the perception must precede the affection, not in the order of *time*, but in the order of *nature*. To love that of which I have no apprehension would be to love that which *to me* has no existence. It would be to love nothing. The apprehension of the object is the ground, that is, the subjective ground of the love; while the *objective* ground is the *contemplated loveliness* of the object. But because the apprehension of the object is presupposed in the affection, we cannot infer that it is a distinct and separate act, preceding the other in point of time. There may be no time passing after I apprehend the object, before I love it. So far as my consciousness goes, apprehending and loving may be one act — one putting forth of mental power. And I may properly denote that act by saying, that I see the object to be excellent and lovely, or by saying, I love it. It is clear, that no one can have a true spiritual discernment of the moral beauty and loveliness of Christ without a heart to love him. And love certainly implies a perception of loveliness.

But there is a kind of knowledge or discernment, often mentioned in Scripture, which does not imply real love or holiness, and has no connection with it. Judas and many others, who knew the person, the miracles, and the instructions of Christ, were not his friends. They were blind to the moral beauty of his character and his gospel. Spiritual things they knew not, and could not know, while in their natural state. The same occurs at the pres-

ent day. Many persons speculatively know and believe the facts of the gospel history, the truth of its doctrines and the reasonableness of its precepts, who have no spiritual discernment and no saving faith. They have knowledge and faith; but they do not apprehend and believe the gospel spiritually. The devils believe and know that there is a God; but they see not his moral beauty and glory. In like manner unregenerate men may have a very correct understanding of the gospel, considered in a speculative point of view. But they do not see its importance, its beauty and excellence. In their view Christ has no form or comeliness; and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him. He is truly possessed of infinite beauty and glory. But this is what the unholy do not discern, and of course do not love. Their knowledge is merely speculative, and implies no love. But it is not so with those who are sanctified. Their knowledge of God and of Christ involves in its very nature affection to its objects.

I have made these remarks with a direct view to the subject before us. I cannot but regard it as highly important to consider justifying, saving faith as a spiritual, holy exercise, — an exercise which involves love in its very nature; so that, as "he that knoweth God loveth God," it may with equal truth be said, he that *believeth*, *loveth*. Justifying faith is both intellectual and moral — a combined act of the understanding and the heart.

I well know that some writers have taken a very different position, and have labored to prove that justifying faith is merely an intellectual act, an exercise of the understanding distinct and separate from all moral affection, — of course destitute of holiness. The particular reason which seems to have operated in their minds in favor of this position, is, that it makes justification altogether a matter of grace. In their reasoning it is assumed, that if faith were a holy act, the believer must be justified on account of the holiness of faith, and so after all, that justification would be a matter of personal merit, and not of free grace, and that no distinction would remain between justification by faith, and justification by works of obedience, inasmuch as the holiness of faith is obedience.

But this is certainly a groundless assumption. For faith may be a holy act, and yet the holiness of faith may not be the ground or procuring cause of the believer's justification. It is unquestionably true that repentance and love, which are required as conditions of salvation, are holy acts; but does it thence follow that the Christian is saved *on the ground* of his repentance and love? Paul, Peter and John performed many acts of holy obedience. But did they procure the blessings of forgiveness and the divine favor by their obedience? Did their salvation cease to be of grace, because they had done good works? Instead of this, did they not feel their dependence for all spiritual blessings on the grace of Christ more and more strongly, as they advanced in sanctification? And when the saints attain to perfect holiness and dwell in the world above, will they not see and acknowledge more than ever before, that their salvation from the beginning to the end is to be ascribed, not to their own holiness, but to the free grace of God through the blood of Christ? Their holiness is itself an essential part of their salvation. And it belongs to the very nature of holiness in redeemed sinners, to abandon all ideas of justification and eternal life on account of their own worthiness, and to regard the work of Christ as the meritorious cause of all the good they receive. This, I say, belongs to the very nature of holiness. So that wherever holiness exists and is active in those who have sinned, there all thought of self-righteousness, or justification by works, will be renounced, and salvation be considered as wholly gratuitous. Here then our doctrine of gratuitous justification rests on a sure basis. Only let sinners be sanctified — let them be illuminated by the divine Spirit, and repent, and exercise a holy faith in Christ, and they will be sure to adopt the doctrine of Paul, that justification is not by works, but by grace; they will adopt and hold fast this essential doctrine, which is taught so clearly in the word of God, and so fully confirmed by the ever-growing convictions of their own sanctified hearts.

There is a class of writers who represent *justification* and *sanctification* to be identical. When it is said, that "by the obedience

of one, many were made righteous," they understand the meaning to be, that many were made *inwardly righteous*, or *holy*. But it is evident that, when the Apostle speaks of our being *made righteous* by the obedience of Christ, and of our being *justified* through his death, he puts our being *justified* or *made righteous* in opposition to our being *condemned*, or held to suffer punishment. Accordingly, the essential thing intended by our *justification* is, our *being forgiven*, or *exempted from punishment*. When God justifies the ungodly, he frees them from suffering the penalty of the law; that is, he treats them *as though* they were personally just or holy. When he sanctifies them, he *makes* them just or holy. The prominent thing in one case relates to their condition as exposed to punishment for sin; in the other case, it relates to their character as sinful. The one may be called a measure of divine government, or an act of God as Lawgiver and Judge; the other as a work of God's Spirit in the heart. Although they always go together, so that every one who is justified is sanctified, and every one who is sanctified is justified, still they are in their nature distinct, and they are so represented in Scripture. Believers are justified through Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, so that nothing will ever be laid to their charge; and they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, that is, are conformed to the moral image of God, and fitted for heavenly blessedness. In the language of an excellent writer, "Both these are found in the same subject. Justification and sanctification should be always discriminated; but they must never be disunited. Where they are not distinguished, a religious system cannot be clear; and where they are divided, it can never be safe. Where they are not distinguished, law and gospel, free-will and free-grace, the merit of man and the righteousness of Christ, run into a mass of confusion. And where they are divided, Pharisaic pride, or Antinomian presumption, will be sure to follow. — Be it remembered then, that one regards something done *for* us, — the other, something done in us. The one is a relative, the other a personal change. The one a change in our state, the other in our nature. The one is perfect at once, the other is gradual. The one is derived from the obedience of our Saviour,

the other from his Spirit. The one gives us a title to heaven, the other a meetness for it."

The question has been much agitated, whether *on the first act of faith a man receives a real and final justification; whether a full forgiveness of all his sins and his final acceptance with God are sure to him as soon as he believes.*

In regard to this, there are two representations of Scripture to be particularly noticed. The first is found in those passages which declare that every one who believes is pardoned, and shall be saved; that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. This representation is often made, and is made in language so plain, that its meaning cannot be easily misunderstood. Unless every one who truly believes in Christ is really forgiven, — unless he is delivered from a state of condemnation, and introduced into a state of favor with God, and entitled to eternal life, the promises to him who believes are evidently deceptive. The other representation of Scripture to be noticed is, that our final salvation depends on our perseverance in faith and obedience to the end of life. "He that endureth to the end, shall be saved." Eternal life is promised to those, "who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality." And believers are told, that if they draw back, they cannot obtain final salvation. All texts of this kind imply, that continuance in well doing is an indispensable condition of our final acceptance. And such a condition is thought to militate against the doctrine, that forgiveness and eternal life are made sure to sinners, as soon as they exercise faith in Christ.

But in reality, is there any inconsistency between these two representations of Scripture? May it not be true, that forgiveness and eternal life are secured to us as soon as we really believe in Christ, and yet, that in order to have eternal life, we must be faithful unto death? If both of these may be true; that is, — if we may be certainly pardoned and our names written in heaven on our first becoming believers, and if our continuing to be believers to the end of life is yet required as a condition of our being finally saved, then clearly these things are not inconsistent with

each other. In order to make out an inconsistency between them, you must make out a case in which one of them is true, and the other not true; — a case in which a man really believes so as to be entitled to the promise of salvation, and yet does not finally persevere in believing. The fact, that forgiveness and eternal life are promised on different conditions, occasions no difficulty, if a compliance on our part with one of these conditions implies that there will certainly be a compliance with all the other conditions. A promise may very properly and consistently be made to us of a free and full salvation on our first believing in Christ, while yet we are told that we must persevere in faith and holiness in order to be saved, on supposition that our first believing in Christ has a sure connection with our perseverance in faith and holiness. The question then is, whether such perseverance is made certain to every one who believes. I think it evident from Scripture, that this is the case. But the proof of this must be postponed to a subsequent Lecture. What I now say is, that supposing this to be true, no one can pretend that the two classes of texts above-mentioned are inconsistent with each other.

But you ask, why believers are told that they must persevere in faith and holiness in order to be saved, if their perseverance is made certain by the first act of their faith. On this supposition, you inquire, why believers are so frequently told that they must persevere in order to be saved. I answer first; they are told this, because it is *a truth, and a very important truth*, — and none the less important, because it is made certain. Secondly; they are told this, because they are moral agents, and must be influenced to a holy life by suitable motives: and one of the motives to influence them to persevere is, that they cannot be saved without perseverance; just as it is a motive with men to repent, that they must repent in order to be saved. The necessity of perseverance constitutes a motive; and as perseverance is none the less necessary, so the motive from that necessity is none the less powerful, because perseverance is made certain, — considering that it is made certain in such a way as not to interfere at all with our free moral agency.

This might all be illustrated by an appeal to facts. Who that truly believes in Christ, and has a full persuasion that all true believers will persevere, is prevented by that persuasion from feeling the importance of persevering, or from the diligent use of his faculties in the work of persevering, or from earnest prayer that God would give him grace to persevere?

Here one more question must be briefly considered. *If our full and final justification, that is, our full and final forgiveness and acceptance with God is made certain to us on our first believing in Christ, then where is the necessity or propriety of our praying for forgiveness in our subsequent life?* Why should we go over the work of confessing sin and seeking pardon, when a full and final pardon was secured by the first act of faith?

I reply, first, that every real Christian is led by his own rectified feelings to confess his sins, to have sorrow for them, and to pray daily for pardon, whatever hope or assurance he may have that he is in a justified state. And such confession, sorrow and prayer are conformed to the precepts of God's word and to the recorded example of his prophets and apostles, and must therefore be considered as just and right, whatever speculative difficulties may attend the subject.

I reply, secondly, that the full and final forgiveness which are secured to us as soon as we believe, is secured *in its proper connection and order*, that is, in its connection with continued faith and prayer; and though it is certainly secured, it is not secured and cannot be enjoyed out of this connection. The *continuance* of faith and prayer is as really necessary to our reaping the blessings of a full forgiveness, as faith or prayer was necessary to our forgiveness at first. When we depart from God and transgress his law, it is not possible that we should taste the joys of pardoned sin and have peace with God — in other words, that we should sensibly or really enjoy forgiveness, without the renewed exercise of repentance, faith and prayer. Without this, we could no more attain to the enjoyment of the blessings involved in forgiveness, than we could attain to the blessedness of being with Christ in heaven without holiness. As the fact, that heaven is secured to

the believer, does not imply that he can enjoy it without the necessary qualifications; so the fact, that a continual forgiveness is secured to him on his first believing, does not imply that he can continue to enjoy that forgiveness without using the means which the appointment of God and the nature of the case make necessary; in other words, without continued faith and prayer.

Consider also, that Christians have inward inducements to repentance and prayer far more generous and noble, than the fear of condemnation. They have seen and tasted that the Lord is good; and a sense of his goodness makes sin appear exceedingly sinful. And when they are conscious of it in themselves, they are led by the higher principles of their renewed hearts, to abhor themselves, penitently to confess their sin, and to cry earnestly to God for mercy, as David did, — "pardon my iniquity for it is great."

In all such cases we are taught by the wisdom from above to perform faithfully the duties enjoined upon us by the word of God and then to let our right practice, our devout and holy life clear away our difficulties, and straighten what is crooked in our intellectual habits.

It is the doctrine of orthodox Protestants generally, that we are justified through the *imputed righteousness of Christ*. This is the doctrine of the creeds adopted by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, by the Puritans of England and by Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the United States of America, by the Episcopal Church in both countries, and by the whole body of Reformed churches in Europe from the time of Luther.

But this doctrine, or rather this manner of stating it, has for some time past been objected to by ministers of the gospel in this country, chiefly in New England. And many ministers and laymen, who have not come to a decision on the subject, have an apprehension, that this form of the doctrine must be given up. When we inquire for the reason of this dissent, we find it to be no other than this; that the doctrine is thought to imply that there is a literal transfer of moral character, or personal attributes, from one to another; — that when it is said, that Adam's sin was

imputed to us, the meaning is, that Adam's *sinful act* became literally *our* act; that we ourselves did really commit the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, and are in our own persons blameworthy for it; that our sins having been imputed to Christ implies that he was really a transgressor, that he himself committed all the sins of those for whom he died, and so was, in reality, an exceedingly unholy man, and an object of the divine displeasure; and that the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us implies that his righteousness or holiness is literally transferred to us, so that we ourselves are free from the defilement of sin, and are as truly righteous, and as worthy of the divine complacency, as Christ was. This apprehension as to the meaning of the doctrine, is at the bottom of the objections urged against it. For when objectors state the reason of their rejecting the doctrine of imputation, they say it is absurd to suppose that there is a transfer of moral good or evil from one person to another, or that one can be deserving of praise or blame for the character or actions of another. They say, they cannot receive a doctrine which is contrary to their own consciousness, and which is evidently absurd. This is their argument.

But I say, in reply, that the men referred to are totally mistaken, as to the import of the doctrine against which they object. The doctrine never had any such meaning as they give it. There is no reason, either from Scripture or from standard Calvinistic divines, to understand the word *impute* in this manner. When God imputes to men their own sins, the meaning evidently is, that he holds them *guilty* and punishes them; and his not imputing sin is his withholding punishment. From Rom. 4: 3—8 it appears, that *not to impute sin, and to impute righteousness*, is the same thing. Paul shows the meaning of the word, when he says to Philemon respecting Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee aught, *put that to mine account;*" according to the original Greek, *impute it* or *reckon it to me — consider it as my debt;* "I will repay it." In all such cases the sense of the word, according to the best authorities, is, "to reckon to one what does not properly belong to him." Thus, when the righteousness of Christ is said to be

imputed to us, the meaning is not, that it properly belongs to us as our own personal righteousness, but that it is so reckoned to us, or put to our account, that we share the benefits of it, or are treated as though we were righteous. In other words, that the fruits of Christ's righteousness are conferred upon us. It is in this manner that the doctrine of imputation has been understood and explained by its most intelligent advocates. It is true, that some Antinomian writers have advanced opinions on the subject, which are totally unscriptural and of the most immoral tendency. And some others, who have been sound in the faith, particularly among the early Reformers, have used expressions which, if taken by themselves, without regard to their peculiar circumstances, would convey a different meaning of the doctrine from the one I have given. But a candid and thorough examination of the writings of the standard orthodox divines will show, that the meaning put upon the doctrine by some late New England divines is wholly unauthorized. The most learned and discriminating among the orthodox divines, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, take special pains to show, that the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us does not imply that his righteousness is transferred to us, or infused into us, so as to become our *personal attribute*, but only that we partake of its benefits; that his righteousness is ours *imputatively*. Paul says righteousness is imputed to believers; that is, they are benefitted by a righteousness which is not their own.

This view of imputation might be confirmed by quotations from Turretine, and all the principal orthodox divines, ancient and modern. Calvin says: "To place our righteousness in the obedience of Christ is to affirm, that *hereby only we are accounted righteous*, because the obedience of Christ is *imputed to us, as if it were our own*." Fuller's explanation is more perspicuous. "Imputation," he says, "is neither the actual transference of our sins to Christ, so as to constitute him really a sinner, nor the actual transference of his righteousness to us, so as to constitute us really innocent and praiseworthy; but the legal *counting of our sins to him, so as that he endured the consequences of them; and the legal counting of his righteousness to us, so as that we*

enjoy the blessings given in reward of it." Dr. George Payne says, still more clearly and guardedly, that "the Scripture sense of the phrase, to count sin or righteousness to an individual, (whether his own or that of some one else,) is to *treat* that individual *as a sinful or righteous man.*" He says: "This view of imputation assumes, that the one perfect work of the Son of God is the ground of justification, to the exclusion of every other." And he considers it as the substance of the doctrine, that *the believer is treated as a just man, for the sake of the righteousness of Immanuel.* He makes it evident, that the Scripture phrase to impute sin or righteousness to any one means, to *treat him as if he were a sinful or a righteous man.* And so "to impute Christ's righteousness to us, is to *treat* us *as though* we possessed it, or "to give us eternal life in consequence of it." Dr. Gardiner Spring represents the subject in the same light. "Righteousness is made over to the believer, and put, as it were, upon him; and he enjoys the full benefit of it, just as though it were his own." "According to God's gracious method of reckoning in the gospel, believers are treated as righteous, because Christ himself, their covenant Head and Representative, is righteous. His righteousness is imputed to them, or set down to their account. Though it does not personally belong to them, it is reckoned to them; as if it were their own."

This, then, is the result. The righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to believers, or is so *reckoned to their account* as to be the moral basis of God's special favor to them; so imputed or made over to them, that they receive eternal life on account of it.

Now what right has any man to say, that the doctrine of imputation implies anything contrary to this; especially to say, that it implies such an impossibility as a real transfer of moral character from one to another, and then to argue against it on that ground? What author, entitled to respect among the Calvinists, has ever advanced a doctrine containing such an absurdity, or given such an explanation of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ?

Do you still object to the word *imputation?* But you cannot fail to see that the Scriptures really teach the doctrine under consideration, and that in some passages they employ language very similar to that against which you object. They speak of imputing righteousness without works, that is, *imputing* righteousness where personal righteousness is wanting. And they even speak of one man *as doing* what was done by another who lived long before him. "Levi," a descendant of Abraham, "*paid tithes in* Abraham; for he was in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him;" which doubtless means that Levi, in consequence of his relation to Abraham, came under the influence of what Abraham did; that Abraham's act was *imputed* or *reckoned* to him, so that it was *as though* he himself had paid tithes to Melchisedec, and had thus acknowledged his inferiority to that priest of the Most High. In conformity with this language, the Catechism says, that all the posterity of Adam "*sinned in him and fell with him* in his first transgression." This expression is marked with freedom and boldness; but it is no more free and bold than the language of Scripture. The meaning of it is, that Adam acted as the head and representative of the human race, and that they partake of the evil effects of his sin, or that their moral depravity and ruin come in consequence of his sin; according to Rom. 5: 12—19.

The righteousness of Christ must be understood to consist in his perfect obedience to the law and his death on the cross; or, as the Apostle expresses it, *his obedience unto death.* His voluntary death was in compliance with the Father's command, and so was an essential part of his obedience. His righteousness, or his merits as Redeemer, must comprise the whole of what he did and suffered for us in his state of humiliation.

But while the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers does not mean that his righteousness is literally transferred to them; or that it is infused into them, so as to make them personally righteous; it is far from being intended that they can be saved without being themselves personally righteous or holy. For surely he did not die to purchase for us liberty to live in sin.

Instead of this, one essential object of his mission was to redeem us from all iniquity and to make us spiritual and holy. I must repeat it, that our doctrine is simply this, — that God saves us from suffering the penalty of the law, and grants us the blessings of salvation, on account of the righteousness of Christ. We receive good from his righteousness, *as though* it were our own. This is the great doctrine of the gospel, — "articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae."

Do you question the propriety or the expediency of this mode of stating the doctrine of justification, because it has sometimes been so understood as to have an Antinomian tendency? I reply, that the language we employ will not fairly admit of such a construction, and that the objection proceeds wholly on the ground of a misapprehension. And how can this be avoided by changing the mode of stating the doctrine? For what language can be used by any man, whether inspired or not, which can be secured against the danger of being misunderstood and misrepresented, and of thus becoming the occasion of error? And is it expedient — nay, is it admissible — that the customary language of theology, and the language of prayer and religious conversation, and the language of God's word, too, should be given up or changed, because it has been, or possibly may be, misrepresented? And if you should give it up, or substitute other language in its place, could you thereby prevent the possibility of mistake? In regard to the propriety of any phraseology, the question is not, whether a wrong sense *can* be put upon it, but whether it is adapted, when candidly interpreted, to convey a true and Scriptural sense. The word *impute*, as employed in the Catechism, has been in general use for ages among the advocates of the truth, to set forth the gospel doctrine of justification; and I maintain that this use is in accordance with Scripture and with the common laws of language.

What, then, is to be done in this case, to guard against error and to convey a just idea of the doctrine? The same, I reply, as is done in other like cases. The theological terms, which are used for the sake of convenience, must be carefully explained.

We must show what sense is intended, and what sense is to be avoided. It is, in my judgment, far better to retain the phraseology in common use, especially when it is in itself unexceptionable, than to introduce a new phrascology. All experience shows that any change in the settled mode of speech, particularly on such a subject, is attended with difficulty and danger. For the most part, it occasions disadvantage to the cause of truth. And I must be permitted to say, it is generally too evident, that those who are forward to lay aside the common language by which orthodox doctrines have been expressed, either have renounced, or are inclined to renounce, the doctrines themselves. Examples of this have frequently occurred, in regard to the common phraseology respecting the Trinity, atonement, the new birth, and other kindred subjects. Men have professedly objected merely to the *terms* of the orthodox creed, not seeming to extend their objections to the creed itself. But time has often made it manifest, that their objections really lay against the doctrines contained in the creed, and that they began to depart from what has been held to be Scripture truth, before they found fault with the common phraseology. Hence the importance of the direction of the Apostle, to "hold fast the form of sound words." *

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* I cannot suffer the above remarks to stand without an exception. I have known many ministers, who have very honestly laid aside the word *impute*, in regard to the sin of Adam and the righteousness of Christ, because they have somehow overlooked its real import, while they have earnestly maintained the very doctrines which are held by those who freely use the word.

I ought, in impartial justice, to add one thing more; namely, that the language sometimes employed by Luther and other Reformers, in the heat of their controversy with the Papists on the present subject, has the stamp of extravagance and rashness, and is incapable of being justified. Many of the passages quoted by Moehler, in his ingenious work on Symbolism, give more plausibility than ought to be given to his objections against the Reformation. The Reformation itself, and the great body of the doctrines of the Reformation, may be, and have been, triumphantly defended. But there is occasionally an indiscretion, excess, and violence in the writings of some of the Reformers, which cannot be defended.

LECTURE CIII.

PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED. THE ORTHODOX DOCTRINE PROMOTIVE OF GOOD WORKS.

To reconcile the writings of Paul and James on the subject of justification, has to many appeared very difficult, and to some impossible. But a proper attention to the rules of interpretation will, I think, contribute not a little towards a satifactory solution of the difficulty. It is one of the most obvious and important rules for interpreting the language of any writer, especially of one who wrote in former times, that we should, as far as we can, consider the circumstances of the writer, the particular occasion of his writing, the object he had in view, the error he meant to oppose, and the truth he aimed to defend; in a word, that we should, as far as possible, put ourselves in the condition of the writer.

What, then, was the condition of Paul? What was the error he wished to confute, and the doctrine he undertook to teach and defend? This we learn from his writings, particularly from his Epistles to the believers at Rome and Galatia. His duty, as an Apostle, required him to expose the mistake of those who sought to be justified by a conformity with the precepts of the law — who went about to establish, by their own works, a righteousness on which they could depend for salvation. To convince them of their error, he presented before them the requirements and the sanctions of the divine law. He showed them that the law promised life to obedience, and threatened death for transgression; that all

men, Jews and Gentiles, were transgressors, and of course were cut off from the possibility of being justified by the law, and were under the sentence of condemnation. He also taught them, that in the dispensation of grace, Christ had made propitiation for sin, and offered them eternal life; that whosoever would receive the testimony of God, and believe in his Son Jesus Christ, should be saved; that justification before God could be obtained only in this new and living way, and was altogether a matter of grace. This was the doctrine of Paul — the doctrine which existing circumstances required him to teach and defend. Had he been in the circumstances of James, he would doubtless have taught the same doctrine with him; and though in circumstances so different, he did in fact teach substantially the same thing, affirming and proving clearly and repeatedly, in his own way, that his doctrine of justification by faith was as far as possible from giving or admitting any license to neglect good works. The moment Paul turned his thoughts to that point, he was as fully awake to the necessity of good works as James was, and asserted it as strongly and decidedly. "Shall we sin," he said, "because we are not under the law, but under grace?" He taught that being under the dispensation of grace, and being justified by faith, instead of dispensing with obedience to the law, effectually secured it; and thus he made it perfectly manifest, that the doctrine which he so earnestly taught was by no means exposed to the objection, which he saw would be brought against it; namely, that it encouraged the neglect of good works, or opened a door for disobedience. And it will be seen before we have done, that as Paul taught the doctrine of James, James taught the doctrine of Paul.

The Apostle James wrote to those who professed to have faith, but had not works; and he told them plainly that *their* faith, that is, faith not productive of good works, could not save them. Why? Because "being alone," that is, not attended with good works, it was "*dead*." See James 2: 17. Such faith was not the faith which justifies and saves, and it was not the faith of which Paul speaks. In verse 18 he teaches, that there is no possible way to *show* our faith, that is, to show that we have true

faith, but by works of benevolence. In verse 19 he pursues the same subject, and refers to the faith of devils. For what purpose? Manifestly to illustrate the worthlessness of that faith which is not productive of good works, and which he repeatedly declares to be "dead."

Thus we see clearly what was the teaching of James. The faith which he calls dead, and which he says cannot save, and which he treats as no better than the faith of devils, was a very different thing from the faith of which Paul speaks, and which he declares to be justifying faith. *Paul never said that we can be justified by a dead faith. And when James says we cannot be justified by a dead faith, he does not contradict Paul.* For what does James really teach? Why, he teaches that a particular kind of faith, that is, *a dead faith*, does not justify. And what does Paul teach? He teaches that *another kind of faith does* justify. They teach two distinct truths, as their different occasions required. But those truths, like all other truths, though distinct, are entirely consistent. And the ministers of Christ, at this day, must teach what Paul taught and also what James taught. If they fail in either, they are wanting in fidelity.

Look again. Did Paul mean to recommend that faith which James declares to be useless? Or did James undervalue that faith which Paul declares to be so important? No. What they did was to assert different truths, and to confute different errors, just as their different circumstances rendered necessary. And the language they used, like all the language of good writers, corresponded with their different subjects, and with their different tastes and habits.

Some authors incline to the idea, that while Paul and James speak of different kinds of justification, they speak of the same kind of faith. But it lies on the very face of what the two apostles have written, that their minds were turned upon two different kinds of faith; the one dead and fruitless, the other alive and efficacious. James says, a dead faith, a faith like what the devils have, cannot justify. But *Paul* speaks of a faith which does justify. And yet Paul himself sometimes does just what

James does, that is, expressly refers to a kind of faith which is of no avail, because it is separate from love, and is of course separate from those good works which are the fruits of love. See 1 Cor. 13: 2, "And though I have all faith — and have not charity, I am nothing."

But these two apostles treat not only of different kinds of *faith*, but of different kinds of *justification* also. Wardlaw says, "The true solution of the difficulty appears to be, that the subjects of which these inspired writers treat, are not the same. They are reasoning against different descriptions of persons, and are speaking of different justifications. The one treats of the justification before God of *a sinner considered as condemned by the law;* the other treats of *a believer in Christ considered in that capacity;*" that is, considered *as a believer*. In accordance with this, Fuller says, "By justification, *Paul* meant the acceptance of a sinner before God. But James refers to his being approved of God *as a true Christian;*" that is, as having true faith. The justification of which Paul treats, that is, forgiveness and acceptance with God, is, we have seen, "by faith, that it might be of grace." The other justification is by works; which is the same as saying, that those who do good works are *manifested to be true believers* — are *seen* to be approved of God — that is, are *seen* to have true, justifying faith; — as James says, "I will *show* thee my faith by my works." And in exact accordance with this, he says, "Was not Abraham *justified by works* when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" *How* justified? The passage referred to shows. Gen. 22: 12. The angel said to Abraham, "Now I *know* that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." "Now I know," that is, it is now *made manifest*, "that thou fearest God." In this way "Abraham was justified by works when he offered up his son." "His faith wrought with his works;" so James has it; or as it is, Heb. 11: 17, "He offered up Isaac *by faith*." What he did was the out-going and manifestation of faith. By this act of obedience it was *known* that he feared God, or was a true believer. In like manner it is said, Heb. 11: 4, that Abel, by the sacrifice he offered to God,

obtained witness that he was righteous. His obedience was a *proof* or *evidence* that he was righteous. By his works he was justified *declaratively*. And it was, I apprehend, in this sense, that Jesus said, Matt. 12: 37, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." The words which men are accustomed to speak, will be evidence in their favor, or against them, — will show that they are justified and approved of God, or disapproved. The same appears to be the sense of Rom. 2: 13. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law are justified." Doing the works of the law *proves* men to be in a justified state.

One thing is remarkable, though generally overlooked; namely, that James quotes the very passage, Gen. 15: 6, which Paul quotes, Rom. 4: 3, and in other places, and to which he attaches so much importance. James says, "And that Scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now if the most important text, by which Paul confirms his doctrine of justification *by faith*, was also fulfilled in the doctrine of James; what reason can there be to think their doctrines inconsistent with each other? They did indeed teach two different branches of divine truth. But it is perfectly plain that neither of them interferes with the teaching of the other. They both say, Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; that is, he was *justified by faith*. And they both maintain with equal earnestness, though in different language, that those who have faith will show it by good works. Sinners who believe, are justified before God by faith; and they are justified *as Christians* — they are made known as those who fear God and are accepted of him, by works of obedience. Both justifications are necessary. And they are not only consistent, but they imply each other. The first leads to the second; and the second results from the first. James does not say, that justification, taken in the same sense, is both by faith and by works. But he teaches, that there is a justification by works, as well as a justification by faith; and that there cannot be the latter where there is not the former, as no man is *justified*

by faith, as a sinner, who is not also, in due time, *justified by works as a believer.*

Knapp suggests that the works of law, whether moral or ceremonial, which Paul excludes from being the ground of justification, are essentially different from the good works which are acceptable to God, and which secure a gracious reward. But he does not make the distinction clear. And if there is such a distinction, it must still be true, that *good works*, works of obedience done from the best motives, can have no place as the ground or procuring cause of our forgiveness and acceptance with God.

On the whole, there appears no more difference between the teachings of Paul and James, than what naturally arose from the difference in their subjects, and in their genius, taste, and manner of writing. And all which both of them have written is as important at the present time, as it was in their day, to make out a consistent and complete system of doctrinal and practical truth.

A heavy charge has been constantly brought by our opponents against our doctrine of justification by faith, *as encouraging men to live in sin* — as opening the door to all manner of wickedness. But let us pause a little, and see whether the charge is founded in truth.

First. It is indeed true, according to our doctrine, that good works are of no account as the meritorious ground of our forgiveness and acceptance with God. But this by no means implies that good works are of no account in other ways. Because we hold that works are not necessary *in one particular respect*, we cannot be justly charged with holding that they are not necessary in other respects. How often is it the case that a thing is indispensable, yea, of the highest consequence, in regard to particular objects, while it has no relation to some other object, and so is of no use in regard to it. It is then evident, that those who urge this allegation against our doctrine, are chargeable with sophistical reasoning. Their objection, as every one must see, has no kind of force. And it is not only without force, but is exceedingly unjust, seeing we are not behind any Christians in asserting and in-

sisting upon the importance and necessity of good works, — though we do not allow them to be the proper basis of justification.

Secondly. If any, who profess to hold the doctrine of justification by faith, do in fact regard and use it as an encouragement to sin; is it right that their misapplication and abuse of the doctrine should be urged as an objection to the doctrine itself? There were those in the Apostle's day, who turned the grace of God into licentiousness. But would it be right to make their wickedness an objection to the doctrine which they thus perverted — especially when the Apostle taught that the doctrine had a directly contrary influence? Every truth is liable to misconception and abuse, and none more so than this doctrine of justification and salvation by grace.

Thirdly. Look at facts. Are not those Christians, who hold the doctrine of justification by faith, as much distinguished for good works — are they not as uniformly obedient to the divine commands, as those who deny the doctrine? The most strenuous opposers of orthodoxy have admitted this, and more than this. And do not the facts in the case show, that those who maintain our doctrine, instead of undervaluing good works, do really and practically consider them as of the highest moment, and as absolutely necessary to salvation?

Fourthly. Come to the doctrine itself. I hold that the doctrine, rightly apprehended, contains, or carries along with it, a combination of the highest conceivable motives to the practice of good works. I begin with *love*, which is the most powerful and efficacious of all motives to obedience. Christ says, they that love him will keep his commandments. It must be so. Obedience is the natural and necessary expression of love; it is love itself, acted out in the life. But this powerful principle is inseparable from faith. *Faith works by love.* That faith which is without love, Paul says, is without value.

Here comes in also the powerful influence of *gratitude.* Believers, having a full conviction that they cannot be saved by their own works, and receiving salvation as a free gift, have, and are sensible that they have, the strongest reasons for gratitude. They

feel that they are not their own — that they belong to him who has bought them with his own precious blood, and has bestowed upon them an unmerited gift of infinite worth; and their great concern is to live to him who died for them, and to glorify him by bearing much fruit.

It is moreover true, according to the representation of Scripture, that the very faith by which believers are justified, purifies their hearts, and overcomes the world, and that it is the grand, efficacious principle of a holy life. Christians walk by faith.

We here see, and we have before seen, what is the nature and influence of faith. No other motives to obedience have so great a power, as those which are brought to act upon the mind by faith. To say then that justification by faith leads to the neglect of good works, is a contradiction. It is the same as to say, that they who are influenced by the strongest possible motives to obey, will be the most likely to disobey. I do not say that these motives exert such an influence upon Christians *notwithstanding* their belief in the doctrine of justification by faith, but that the motives are involved *in the doctrine itself*, and that all who truly embrace the doctrine, will feel that influence, and will feel it more effectually in proportion as they receive the doctrine more heartily, and hold it with a firmer grasp.

And here plain truth compels me to say, that Swedenborg, Catholics, Socinians and others are guilty of injustice seldom equalled, when they allege, that the doctrine of the Reformers in regard to justification is of an immoral tendency, and leads to the practice of impiety and vice. If they would attend to Scripture testimony, and to the declared belief and the known practice of the Reformers — if they would regard arguments or facts, they would cease to make use of an objection which has thousands of times been shown to be utterly groundless.

Look then for a few moments at the real doctrine of the Reformers, and of those who have since followed their faith, in regard to *justification* and *good works*. This you will best learn from their Symbols or published Confessions, in which

they have set forth their belief with all possible clearness and care.

The Augsburg Confession was drawn up, at the suggestion of the Protestant Princes, by Melancthon, in the year 1530, and expresses the views of the Reformers with remarkable perspicuity. The following extracts show how they understood and taught the doctrine of justification, and of good works: "Notwithstanding the gospel requires repentance — it teacheth us that remission is given us freely, that is, that it doth not depend on the condition of our own worthiness, nor is given for any works that went before, nor for the worthiness of such as follow after." — "Although contrition in repentance is necessary, yet we must know that remission of sins was given unto us, and that we are made just of unjust, that is, reconciled or acceptable — *freely for Christ*, and not for the worthiness of our contrition, or of any good works which either go before or follow after." But it is added, that "the promise," that is, the promise of gratuitous justification, "detracteth nothing from good works, yea, it doth stir up men unto faith, and unto true good works." — Again. "When we say that we are justified by faith, we do not mean that we are just for the *worthiness of that virtue*, but — that we obtain remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness by mercy showed us for Christ's sake. But this mercy cannot be received but by faith." Further. "St. Paul and St. James do not disagree. For where James saith, the devils believe and tremble, he speaketh of a historical faith. Now this faith doth not justify. — Whereas, when we teach in our churches the most necessary doctrine and comfort of faith, we join therewith the doctrine of good works, to wit, that obedience to the law of God is requisite in them that are reconciled. For the gospel preacheth newness of life, according to that saying, *I will put my laws in their hearts.* — And thus we must judge that good works are necessary, that they are are service of God, and spiritual sacrifices, and that they deserve a reward."

The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England were agreed upon by the Archbishops, Bishops and clergy of England and Ire-

land, in the year 1562, and were adopted as the Faith of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, in the year 1801. The following quotations are sufficient for the present purpose.

"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith; and not for our own works or deservings." — "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree is discerned by the fruit."

The Westminster Confession, which treats the subject of justification, faith and works more clearly and fully, was drawn up by an assembly of divines convened at Westminster, 1643, and approved by the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, 1645. It was acknowledged as the Confession of Faith of the New England churches by the Synod of Cambridge, 1648. It is also received by the several branches of the Presbyterian church in the United States.

"Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith." — "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." — "Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to

his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet inasmuch as he was given of the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace." — "By this faith," (saving faith) "a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word — and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life." — "Good works are only such as God has commanded in his holy word, and not such as without any warrant thereof are devised by men. — These good works, done in obedience to God's commands, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life."

The Savoy Confession was agreed upon by the Elders and Messengers of the Congregational churches in England, at their meeting at Savoy, 1658, and was approved by the Synod of the Congregational churches in Massachusetts, 1680, and by the Elders and Messengers of the churches in Connecticut, assembled at Saybrook, 1708. This Confession is the same as the Westminster Confession, excepting a few slight variations in the expressions, which affect not the doctrine. Indeed no one, without a very careful comparison, would perceive any difference.

On the subject of justification and good works, the Helvetic, the French, the Belgic, the Bohemian, the Baptist, and the Methodist Confessions all agree with the Presbyterian and Episcopalian Confessions as above quoted. And if any one wishes

to know more particularly how totally groundless and false is any allegation against the orthodox churches of Protestant Christendom in regard to the theory or practice of good works, let him peruse the writings of the most distinguished Protestant divines, from Melancthon and Calvin to Edwards and Dwight.

LECTURE CIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE STATED AND PROVED.

Every doctrine of Scripture, taken in the sense in which the inspired writers intended to teach it, bears the stamp of divine truth and divine authority, and is adapted to produce a salutary effect upon those who believe it. But any doctrine of revelation may be so misapprehended, as to have the nature and influence of error. And this misapprehension often arises from the circumstance that a doctrine of Scripture is contemplated and believed *alone*, its relation to other truths being overlooked. A regard to that relation is always important, and often indispensable to a right understanding of a doctrine. But the modification which a doctrine receives from its connection with other doctrines is seldom set forth in express terms in the word of God, and is not generally considered as it should be, by those who believe in revelation. It becomes then an important inquiry, how this great evil is to be avoided. The answer is obvious. Scripture teaches not only the particular doctrine which we at any time consider, but all the other doctrines to which it bears a relation. It devolves then upon us as our duty, to receive with a simple, child-like faith, each doctrine and all the doctrines taught in Scripture, — to give them all a place in our understandings and our hearts. When the doctrines of revelation are thus received and held by an intelligent and devout Christian, they will be likely, without any labor of philosophy or logic on his part, to adjust themselves properly in his mind, and, perhaps in a way of which he is not partic-

ularly aware, to give to themselves and to each other the very modification required. An enlightened and comprehensive faith has an efficacy to prevent misapprehension. Where such a faith exists, the truth of each doctrine is clearly seen, because other related doctrines are seen in their proper connection with it. In proportion as the spirit of faith is exercised, the various doctrines of revelation will stand before the mind, each in its own light and also in the light reflected upon it from the others; while all together will exert a harmonious and happy moral influence. And this freedom from misconception and this sanctifying influence of the various truths of Scripture in the minds of believers is owing, as I have suggested, not to any laborious intellectual process, but to a serious, earnest searching of the word of God, and to the acting of a simple, child-like faith.

My present object is, *to give a statement and explanation of the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance; to present the evidence of its truth; to obviate objections against it; and to notice its practical uses.*

The statement we give of the doctrine should not be embarrassed with any matters which do not essentially belong to it. For example; it would be improper to represent the doctrine to be this; that every regenerate person will certainly be preserved from all habits and all wilful acts of sin, and will continually go forward in the way of obedience till he reaches heaven. For both Scripture and experience show, that real believers are often interrupted in their obedience; that they are prone to backslide; that they have wrong habits of feeling and action; that they often and sometimes wilfully commit sin, and always, in this life, fall short of perfect conformity with the divine law. Nor is it necessary in stating the doctrine, to say, that believers are never entirely destitute of the exercise of holiness. Such a declaration, to say the least, would be contrary to appearances, and to the consciousness of Christians. And, considering the ambiguity of language, it would be inexpedient and unsafe to say, without explanation, that real Christians have *no power* to apostatize — that they *cannot* fall away and perish. For in an obvious and impor-

tant sense, it is not only true that they have *power* to apostatize, and *can* fall away and perish, but that, in themselves considered, they are in the utmost danger of doing it. So the Synod of Dort express it: "Because of the remains of indwelling sin and the temptations of the world and of Satan, the converted could not continue in this grace, if they were left to their own strength." Again they say, "Not by their own merits or strength, but by the gratuitous mercy of God, they obtain it, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace, nor finally continue in their falls and perish; which, *so far as they themselves are concerned*, not only might easily be done, but would undoubtedly be done; while, *in respect to God*, it *cannot* be done, as his counsel cannot be changed, nor his promise fail, nor their vocation according to his purpose be rendered void, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit become vain, or be obliterated." Our doctrine then implies, that if believers sin, as they often do, they will repent; that is, that they will not sin impenitently, as others do; that if they backslide, they will be restored; that if amid the pollutions of the world they are polluted, they will be purified; that if they depart from the way of holiness, they will return to it. Thus, according to the doctrine, they will be preserved from all fatal dangers. Though in themselves inconstant, and weak, and prone to transgress, they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The doctrine, as now explained, is the statement of the important fact, that *all the regenerate will finally persevere in faith and obedience, and attain to eternal life.*

I now proceed to the proof of the doctrine.

My first inquiry is, whether the doctrine can be conclusively proved from *the nature of holiness* in those who are renewed. My reply is this. If the nature of holiness in a moral agent, would, by itself, certainly secure its perpetual continuance, then no holy being would ever fall into sin. But we know that both angelic and human beings have fallen from a state of holiness to a state of sin. These facts show what is also evident from other considerations, that holiness, existing in created beings, does not, by itself, involve the certainty of its continuance. No being but God

is absolutely immutable. Dependent beings, particularly those who are in a state of probation, are in themselves liable to change. Though they are holy to-day, yet, unless sustained by divine power, they may become unholy to-morrow.

But although the nature of holiness in dependent beings, considered by itself, would not certainly prove that it will be perpetuated; yet a presumptive argument in favor of this conclusion may be derived from the peculiar *circumstances* of the case in redeemed sinners. A great and marvellous work has been accomplished in order to bring about their renewal. God has sent his Son to die for them, and to prepare the way for their salvation. He has caused them to hear the glad tidings, and by his Spirit inclined them to accept the offered Saviour. These gracious proceedings, these acts of a Redeeming God, opening the way for their salvation, and beginning the work of salvation in their hearts, clearly indicate his merciful purpose to give them eternal life, and so may be regarded as evidence of no small weight, that they will be preserved from final apostasy, and will attain to eternal life. This evidence, you observe, does not arise from the mere nature of holiness, but from those circumstances of the case which indicate God's purpose to save the regenerate.

Can then the certain perseverance of all who are regenerated be proved from the doctrine of *election?* I reply; that this doctrine clearly proves the final perseverance of all who are regenerated, unless it can be shown that some are regenerated who are not elected to salvation. But this would be a hopeless undertaking. For it is the representation of Scripture, that when God calls men with a holy calling, he does it in execution of his eternal purpose to save; that conversion or faith is the commencement of eternal life; and that all who are called according to his purpose, are justified and glorified. If the doctrine of election proves the final salvation of any believers, it proves the salvation of all believers.

Again, I inquire, whether the perseverance of believers can be certainly inferred from the bare consideration of the *benevolence, the power, and the immutability of God.* Now it seems to me

that any attempt to prove the certain perseverance of believers from the attributes of God, considered as *separate from the instructions of his word*, would involve us in the difficulties to which we are always exposed when we venture upon such a mode of reasoning. We can safely conclude, that a Being, possessed of infinite perfections, will certainly do what is right. But in regard to many subjects, and particularly the present subject, we should be unable by our own reason to determine what is right; and hence we should be utterly unable to determine in what particular manner God will manifest his perfections, except so far as he himself should give us information. If we were uninstructed by his word and by the history of facts, we should be much inclined to think, that God would preserve all holy beings in a state of rectitude. But this would be a mistake. Reasoning in the same way, we should think it exceedingly probable, if not certain, that God, in the exercise of his infinite power and goodness, would bring all mankind to enjoy the precious blessings of salvation. But we know the fact, that the means of salvation are given only to a part of mankind, and that a great multitude of those who enjoy these means, will perish in their sins. It becomes us therefore to avoid conjectures, to distrust abstract arguments, to remember the weakness and fallibility of human reason, and to regulate our faith, especially on the subject now before us, by the teachings of the inspired writers. If they inform us that God will preserve all believers from final apostasy, we then have a firm basis on which to rest our belief in the doctrine under consideration.

Once more. Can the final salvation of all believers be certainly proved from those passages of Scripture which promise salvation to those who endure to the end — in other words, which promise eternal life on condition of persevering obedience? I answer; we cannot be sure of their eternal life, unless we can be sure that they will fulfil the condition on which it is promised. There are absolute promises, and there are conditional promises. An absolute promise from God, that he will preserve and save all who are renewed by his Spirit, is itself conclusive evidence that

they will be saved. But if a condition is introduced, we cannot know that the good promised will be bestowed, unless we know that the condition will be complied with.

I ask now, what may reasonably be demanded as the ground of a confident belief in the doctrine before us? The doctrine may be stated in two ways. First. All true believers will persevere in holiness, so as to obtain eternal life. The doctrine stated in this way, points out the *duty* of Christians, and may properly be called the doctrine of the saints' *perseverance.* And the evidence requisite to prove the doctrine in this form, is a plain declaration from Scripture that they will persevere. Secondly; the doctrine may be stated thus; that God will preserve all true believers from fatal apostasy, and finally save them in his kingdom. Presented in this form, the doctrine may, with more exact propriety, be called the doctrine of believers' *conservation* or *preservation.* And here the proof must consist in a declaration of God, that he will thus preserve and save them. But in making out the proof of the doctrine, there will be no occasion to observe this distinction. For the texts which prove that God will preserve the saints, prove also that they will persevere in holiness; as the very thing which God does is preserving them *in a state of persevering holiness*, or *causing them to persevere.* And those texts which prove that they will *persevere*, do virtually prove that God will *preserve* them; for they will persevere in no other way than as they are divinely preserved.

Here it is obvious, that the texts which set forth the promise of God that he will preserve believers, are not conclusive proofs of the doctrine, except on the principle that he has power so to direct and control their moral faculties and moral actions, as to secure their perseverance. For what would his promise to preserve them avail, unless he is able, notwithstanding all the disorders of their understandings and hearts, to carry his promise into execution? Believers are said to be "kept by the power of God," sometimes called his "mighty power," "through faith unto salvation." The implication plainly is, that he possesses power sufficient for this work — that how great soever the number and

strength of their enemies, and how fearful soever the perils of their condition, from within as well as from without, he is able to protect and deliver them. We need not inquire in what particular manner he exercises his power in this work. But that he actually possesses and exercises a sovereign, controlling power over all the springs of action in his creatures, and over all the influences which can bear upon them, and that he exercises this power with perfect ease, and without superseding or interrupting in the least degree their free moral agency and accountability, is made exceedingly clear from the word and providence of God, and from their own consciousness. Any one who is conversant with the sacred Scriptures must see, that the writers everywhere proceed on the assumption, that God can direct and overrule the hearts, the wills, and actions of men, and all their affairs, and that no idea different from this ever entered their minds. We shall, then, consider this principle to be presupposed in all the arguments we derive from the declarations and promises of God, that he will preserve and finally save believers — such declarations having no title to our confidence on any other ground than this, that God is both able and disposed to carry his declarations into effect.

The important truth, that God will exercise a gracious care over his children, and will keep them from fatal dangers, is often set forth in the Old Testament, as the foundation of hope and encouragement. See Ps. 37: 23, 24, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Isa. 54: 10, "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Jerem. 32: 40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good." It may be said that God promises this favor to his people, on the condition, sometimes expressed and always implied, that they do not depart from him. This I admit. But in the closing part of the very sentence last referred to, he *promises to secure the fulfilment of this condition.* "I will put my fear in their hearts, *that they shall not depart from me.*"

Passages pertinent to the subject are found in various parts of the New Testament. Begin with John 3: 36, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" — *hath* it *now*. It is a mode of expression often used in Scripture, to denote the certainty of the event foretold. John 5: 24 is still stronger: "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "He hath everlasting life;" the present tense again. It is as much as to say, *he is already saved — the thing is done.* How could such language be used, if there were any uncertainty as to the event predicted?

John 6: 39, 40, and 54, "This is the Father's will, who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him, should have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. * * Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Again, John 10: 27—29, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I will give unto them eternal life, and *they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand.* My Father is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." What greater certainty could there be of the present security and the final salvation of believers? In Rom. 8: 30, 38, 39, the Apostle expresses his joyful and elevated feelings in view of the certain perseverance and final glory of the followers of Christ: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified. * * For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It would be very frigid to understand the Apostle as saying, that none of these things can separate us from the love of God, or prevent our obtaining salvation, *if we* are faithful, and take care of

ourselves. For such is the corruption of our hearts, the deceitfulness of sin, and the power of temptation, that, if we were left to ourselves, we should certainly fall away and perish. We need, then, a higher consolation than to be told, that we shall attain to the heavenly rest, *if* we are faithful to our own souls — that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, *if* we do not separate ourselves. For if God, in the fulness of his mercy, has not secured a sanctifying influence for his children — if Christ does not, by his invincible agency, effectually redeem us from the power of sin — if he does not subdue that subtle foe, a corrupt heart within us, and carry on his own work of grace to a successful issue — we shall make shipwreck of the faith, and perish with the wicked world. But the Apostle's language is not that of conjecture, or probability, or conditionality, but of certainty and exultation. He says, and says very strongly, that nothing in the universe can deprive those who are effectually called, of the everlasting benefits of God's love. This joyful confidence is exhibited very clearly, but in another form, Rom. 5: 9, 10, "God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Then, in the way of a divine inference, he adds: "Much *more*, then, being now justified by his blood, *we shall be saved from wrath through him.*" The Apostle does not stop even with this, but goes on to repeat his divine logic: "For if, while we were yet sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; *much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" The argument is perfectly clear and conclusive. If Christ has accomplished the more wonderful and difficult work for us, how much more certainly may we expect him to accomplish what remains. How could the Apostle write such a passage, and in such a connection, unless he believed that the almighty Redeemer would himself preserve every one of his people from final apostasy, and give them a crown of glory in his kingdom? It seems impossible for any language to express this welcome truth more plainly or more forcibly than that which I have quoted. In this passage, and in John 10: 27—29, above cited, and in other places, the certain preservation of the saints is repre-

sented as depending on the mercy and the omnipotence of God. The conclusion is, that if God has power and mercy adequate to the work, he will preserve believers, and give them a place at his right hand. In 1 Cor. 10: 13, their safety is made to depend on God's faithfulness: "God is *faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The Apostle Paul unhesitatingly expresses his confidence in the truth of our doctrine, in Philip. 1: 6. "Being confident" — he does not say the thing would take place *probably*, or on some precarious condition — but "being *confident* of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, *will perform it until the day of Christ*." The original word here rendered *perform*, signifies to *finish* — to carry through to an end. The Apostle was confident that God, who had begun the work of sanctification in the Philippian Christians, would *finish* it — would *carry it on to its completion*.

Peter unites with Paul, in representing the preservation and ultimate salvation of believers as secured by divine power. He says, they "are *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*." The work might fail of being accomplished, if it depended on the power of created beings. But as its accomplishment depends on the divine omnipotence, it cannot fail.

The persevering holiness and final salvation of believers is rendered certain by the intercession of Christ. How explicit and earnest was his prayer for his people: "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "Sanctify them through thy truth." And the Epistle to the Hebrews places the salvation of those who believe in close connection with the power and intercession of our ever-living Saviour. Heb. 7: 25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." If, then, any true saints fall away and perish, it must be because Christ is not able to save them, and because his intercession does not prevail.

I might argue also, from the work of the Holy Spirit, as set

forth in 2 Cor. 1: 21, "Now he that establisheth us with you, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit." In Ephes. 1: 13, 14, the Apostle speaks of believers as having the seal of the Spirit, which is the earnest of their future inheritance. The sanctifying work of the Spirit in believers is the sure pledge and forerunner of their final salvation.

There is a great variety of texts, besides those above cited, which furnish support to our doctrine. But it is unnecessary to produce them. For no language of inspired or uninspired writings could declare the doctrine more unequivocally, than the language already cited. If this does not teach it, nothing can.

LECTURE CV.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE. ITS USES.

We shall now examine the arguments which our opponents use to invalidate the doctrine of the saints' perseverance.

In the first place, they speak of the texts which promise final salvation *conditionally;* such as those which declare that they who are faithful unto death shall receive the crown of life, and that they who endure to the end shall be saved. Now what I have to say on this point is this; that the passages in which salvation is promised on the expressed or implied condition of persevering faith and obedience, teach a truth which is of great practical importance, and which ought to be plainly declared and often insisted upon. But they do not teach the whole truth. This portion of Scripture is necessary; but other portions are also necessary. The same inspired volume which declares that believers shall be saved if they endure to the end, goes further, and declares that *they shall endure.* Here is an additional truth, which is suited to honor God and to animate and comfort his people. The condition referred to has relation to us as rational, moral beings, and is rendered indispensable by the character of God and by the nature of salvation. What Scripture does is, not to set this condition aside, but to inform us that, through the grace of God, *it will be fulfilled.* And what reason has any one to say, that a condition is interfered with by the certainty of its fulfilment, or that the previous certainty of its fulfilment, and the knowledge of that certainty, is inconsistent with the existence

and the beneficial influence of the condition? We maintain, in common with those who deny the doctrine under consideration, that persevering faith and obedience is an indispensable condition of the final salvation of the regenerate. In regard to this point, we have no controversy with our opponents. The question between us is, whether, according to Scripture, God will so influence believers that they will in fact persevere, and thus fulfil the condition on which eternal life is promised? The arguments which prove that they will persevere have been briefly stated. These two things — the conditional promise, and the absolute promise that the condition shall be accomplished — exist together, and both contribute important aid to believers, and the very aid which they need in the great work to which they are called. Neither the one nor the other could be omitted in the word of God, without essential injury to their spiritual interest. And those Christians who seem to give up either the one or the other, do still, in some way, practically avail themselves of both.

The coëxistence of these two things, and the importance and necessary influence of the conditionality of an event in connection with its certainty, are happily illustrated by what occurred during Paul's voyage to Rome. It was supernaturally revealed to Paul, and by him made known for the encouragement of the men in the ship, that notwithstanding the dangers which they were to encounter, their lives should all be preserved. But by and by when dangers alarmed them, they proposed, as a means of safety, to leave the ship. Then came in the necessary condition of their safety: "Except these abide in the ship," said Paul, "ye cannot be saved." They could not be saved without complying with this condition; and yet their safety had been made known to Paul, and to the Centurion and the mariners, as an ultimate certainty. And it is plain, that Paul's insisting upon the condition at the exact time when it was called for, proved the effectual means of securing the preservation which the angel had revealed as a certainty. Dr. Whately, who makes a good use of this case, says, I think incautiously, "that the Apostle *regarded* the assurance given him of the safety of all in the ship *as grounded on* the sup-

position, that he should employ the proper means of safety." But there is nothing in the narrative to warrant this. The Apostle regarded the event as certain, merely because it was declared to him by an infallible messenger. This divine communication, and this alone, was the *ground* of Paul's persuasion that they should all be preserved. Whether he thought of any means to be used, or not, he confidently believed the fact revealed to him. But it was true, that proper means would be employed. The accomplishment of the promised event required this — required the very means which were made use of. The certainty of that event was one thing; the means used for its accomplishment was another thing. There is no need of abstract reasoning to reconcile them. Common sense, whether in the philosopher or the child, sees that they consist together. And it is, moreover, evident, that a sure expectation of obtaining the good which we desire, will naturally lead us to use the proper means of obtaining it. And we shall be likely to use the means with spirit, in proportion to the assurance we feel of ultimate success. This principle, rightly apprehended and applied, is sufficient to obviate the most plausible objection ever made against our doctrine — the objection from its alleged bad influence. This we shall particularly consider in its proper place.

The case of the mariners above explained admits of an easy application to the perseverance of the saints. The certainty of the final salvation of believers is a matter of fact clearly revealed in the word of God. And it is also revealed, that in order to reach that salvation they must persevere in obedience. This is laid down as an indispensable condition. Now this condition, considered merely by itself, would imply a real uncertainty in regard to their salvation. Yea, if they were to be left to themselves, there would be something more than this uncertainty; for they would actually fall short of heaven. But here comes in their security. God has promised to keep them, through faith unto salvation; and his promise cannot fail. Through the help of his grace, then, believers will certainly persevere in holiness, and obtain eternal life. Thus, according to the

Scriptures, the final salvation of believers is both *conditional* and *certain*. These two things, — the conditionality and the certainty of their salvation, — united together, are adapted to produce the best possible effects. If the *absolute certainty* of their final salvation were the only thing revealed, they might be exposed to a sinful confidence and a fatal indolence. Or if they were disposed to be active, they would not know what to do. But as the necessary condition of salvation is also clearly revealed, they know exactly what to do, and why they must do it. The infinite value of salvation, and their desire to obtain it, stimulate them to persevering diligence and fidelity. But, on the other hand, if the condition were the only thing made known, and believers were left without any promised aid from above to insure the fulfilment of that condition, they would be destitute of encouragement and support where they would most need it, and would be exposed to a disheartening and paralyzing uncertainty as to the final issue of their labors and prayers. For although they might now be resolved to be diligent in well doing, what reason could they have to feel assured that their resolution and diligence would continue? What confidence could they have in their own hearts, which experience had plainly shown to be so fickle, weak, and deceitful? Presumption and carnal security are indeed fearful evils, and should in every form and degree be most watchfully avoided. But they are not the only evils which beset the followers of Christ. Nor are they the evils to which the meek and humble are generally most liable. Discouragement, despondency, and spiritual torpor naturally result from thinking too much on the danger of ultimate failure. The Apostle presents the idea, that God would confirm his people to the end, and finish the work which he had begun in them, as the means of cheering and animating their hearts, and promoting their progress in holiness. With him it was no matter of cold speculation or philosophy, but a subject of gratitude and joyful exultation. When Christians are impressed, as they should be, with the sinfulness and treachery of their own hearts and their proneness to depart from God, it is not enough for them to know that God will fulfil his promises and give them

eternal life, *if they are not wanting on their part.* For they are aware that they shall be wanting, unless they are aided from above. Both Scripture and experience have taught them, that it is totally unsafe to trust in themselves, and that their persevering in the way to heaven depends ultimately on the continuance of that divine influence to which they have no just claim. So far as they are left in doubt whether that influence will be granted, they will have painful doubts as to their final salvation. How earnestly, then, must they desire and pray, that God would grant them continually the needed influence of his Spirit, and thus keep them from falling, and prepare them for the rewards of grace; and how cheering the assurance that God will do it.

But it is still asserted by our opponents, that our doctrine must naturally influence those who believe it to negligence and supineness in the business of religion, and that, in connection with the kindred doctrine of election, it has often, in fact, proved the occasion of uncommon hardness of heart, and sometimes of the most shameless immorality and impiety.

To rid your minds effectually of this difficulty, which has been so often urged against the doctrine under consideration, I would solicit your attention to the following points.

To whom, I ask, does the doctrine really belong? It belongs to Christians, and to no others. The sincere followers of Christ are the persons who shall be preserved from fatal apostasy. The impenitent, the hypocritical, whatever their profession or appearance, will go away from Christ and perish in sin.

What, then, is the meaning of objectors? Do they mean that it has a bad influence upon *wicked men*, to believe that good men will, through divine grace, persevere in holiness? Without doubt it may have this influence. Those who are governed by selfishness and pride may feel badly towards a Christian, because he is in a more happy condition than they are. They may envy him, because he is an heir of that salvation which they reject, and because God is engaged to finish the good work which he has begun in their hearts. God's faithful care over his people is an unspeakable blessing, and may excite envious emotions in the

ungodly, and so occasion an increase of their wickedness. And a similar effect may be produced upon them by any other gospel truth, or any other instance of God's special favor. Their hearts may be irritated by the conversion of a sinner, and by the holy and happy life of a believer. Nothing is too sacred to be perverted by the enemies of God. But can their unreasonable and wicked feelings and conduct be alleged as an objection against divine perfection and divine truth? I must, however, say, that the doctrine before us is, in its own nature, adapted to exert a good influence, even upon the impenitent, and, like other truths, may be used as a motive to repentance and faith. Hearken, we may say to them — hearken to the gospel, put away your sins, and come into the happy condition of believers; and then God will not only pardon you, but will keep you from falling, and enable you to continue in the way of holiness, till you reach the heavenly rest. We do not offer you a precarious good. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and eternal life is yours.

Do objectors mean to say, that the belief of our doctrine is likely to have a bad influence upon *false professors* of religion? This I also admit. If men think themselves Christians when they are not — they will naturally appropriate to themselves promises and a prospect of divine favor, to which they have no title. And not being influenced by love to the Saviour, and looking only at their own private interest, which they consider as already secured, they may be more neglectful of duty, and more confirmed in a life of impiety, because they believe and misapply the doctrine before us. This doctrine, associated with their corrupt dispositions, silences conscience, banishes salutary fear, and places them at an almost hopeless distance from salvation. But all this is *their* fault, not the fault of the doctrine. To such as they are, the gospel, as preached by an Apostle, was the savor of death unto death.

Again. Does the objection come from some *real Christians, who reject the doctrine* because they think the belief of it would be injurious to them? My reply is, that they cannot know what effect the doctrine would really produce in their minds, while they

reject it. Let them cordially embrace the doctrine as revealed in Scripture, and then they will be able to form a correct judgment of its appropriate influence.

I ask again, is it the meaning of objectors, that *real Christians* may be injured by the belief of the doctrine under review? This, too, I grant, may sometimes be the case. Christians may backslide, and for a time lose the life of piety. In this state of declension, they may pervert all the truths of religion. In particular their belief of the certain perseverance of the saints, mixing with the unhallowed passions which now predominate in their hearts, may beget a presumptuous security, and instead of exciting them to repent and return to their forsaken Saviour, may render them more unmindful of their duty, and more disposed to continue in the indulgence of their evil propensities. This is a woful fact. And it clearly shows what would be the issue of the temporary apostasies of Christians, were it not for the unchangeable love and faithfulness of God, which now, in their wretched backslidings, they turn to the injury of their own souls.

After these admissions, we are brought to the real question between us and our opponents; namely, what influence the doctrine under discussion is *suited to have upon the followers of Christ, when they feel and act as they ought.* The position which I maintain is, that the doctrine, rightly apprehended and received, is eminently suited to animate Christians to the various duties of a holy life, to strengthen them in their weaknesses and discouragements, and to contribute in all respects to their spiritual prosperity.

The doctrine, that believers are kept from fatal apostasy *by the power of God*, implies that they are not sufficient to keep themselves; a proper belief of which works habitual humility in their hearts, and makes them feel the necessity of coming often to the throne of grace, that they may be guarded from seen and unseen dangers, and may obtain the help which they constantly need. The doctrine in its Scripture form, coming to those who are lowly in heart, and who are sensible of their fickleness and their need of strength from above, conduces directly to the habit of fervent

prayer. It is here, as in other cases, that trust in the promises of God leads Christians to pray for the blessings promised. Trusting as they do in God's promise that he will never forsake his children, but will preserve them to his eternal kingdom, they earnestly seek of him the promised protection and security.

Again. The doctrine, duly received, promotes *resolution* and *activity* in the work of religion. The confidence of Paul that he and all who were with him in the ship would get safe to land, stimulated him to the proper efforts to secure the predicted safety. It has been said of Whitefield, that his expectation of success was among the chief causes of his zeal and power in preaching. Dr. Whately, who is no Calvinist, says, the idea "that confidence of success necessarily diminishes exertion, is notoriously the reverse of the truth. Every General seeks to inspire his soldiers with the firmest confidence of victory; which experience proves to be the best incentive to those exertions which are necessary to ensure it. Many a man, from having been persuaded, that he is destined to attain some great object, instead of being lulled into carelessness by this belief, has been excited to the most laborious and unwearied efforts, such as perhaps otherwise he would not have thought of making, for the attainment of his object." And the same writer refers to the case of Paul who, trusting in the promised grace of Christ, pours forth his exulting confidence of reaching the blessedness of heaven; — "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." With such an assurance, what labors did the Apostle resolutely perform, and what extremity of suffering did he patiently endure! Let, then, no disheartening doubts and fears be lodged in the minds of the humble and self-distrusting disciples of Christ. Let them cheerfully rely, not upon their own power, but upon the power of God, "which worketh in them mightily." Let them rejoice in his promise and grace, being confident that he who hath begun a good work in them will carry it on to its completion.

Another objection against the doctrine before us is, that it is *inconsistent with free agency.*

To this I reply; that the continuance of their sanctification by the Spirit of God is certainly no more inconsistent with their being free, moral agents, than the commencement of that work. Nothing can be more evident than this; that God, who is the Creator and upholder of moral beings, must be able to begin and continue the work of their renewal to holiness without destroying or interrupting their intellectual or moral faculties. However powerful and efficacious his influence in their sanctification may be, no one of them will ever suffer the least infringement of his freedom. It is not the Spirit of God, but the power of sin, that breaks in upon our moral freedom and reduces us to slavery.

It is the practice of all enlightened Christians to pray, that God would keep them from falling and prepare them for the inheritance of the saints above. But do they mean to pray for that which God cannot do without destroying their moral agency? What would you think of Christians who should offer up prayer in this sort; *we beseech thee, O God, to enable us to persevere in holiness to the end of life, if thou canst do it without destroying our moral agency.*

Finally. You may as well say, it is inconsistent with the free moral agency of angels and saints in heaven for God to perpetuate *their* holiness, as to say the same of saints on earth. And you may as well cut the matter short, and deny the truth of the Bible and the existence of God, as to say the one or the other.

Objectors cite the passages of Scripture which contain exhortations to Christians to persevere, and solemn warnings against apostasy, and threats of perdition to those who forsake the ways of holiness; and all these, they say, plainly imply that Christians may fall away, and that they are in danger of it.

Reply. I acknowledge that Christians, in themselves considered, may fall away and perish, and that they are in great danger of it. Our doctrine is, not that Christians are in no danger of fatal apostasy, but that God uses suitable means in order to preserve them from danger, and accompanies those means with such

an influence as will render them effectual to secure the end desired. As Christians are rational, moral beings, the means called for are rational motives — motives adapted to influence their reason, their conscience, their hopes and fears, and all their moral affections. Such are the exhortations and warnings referred to. If Christians are to persevere, they must be influenced to persevere by these very motives. If God intends to secure their perseverance, he will of course set before them those considerations which are suited to bring about that result. The warnings and exhortations of Scripture — all the modes of address adapted to guard them against sin and draw them to untiring obedience, are as really necessary, as means in any case are necessary to the accomplishment of a desired object. Believers are sanctified through the truth; and the considerations alluded to are a portion of divine truth. And you might dispense with any other portion of the truth as safely as with this. The passages of Scripture which are made the ground of the objection, instead of proving that the perseverance of believers is a matter of uncertainty, rather prove that God is determined to secure it. At least, it would be difficult to see how he could consistently secure it in any other way; just as it would be difficult to see how he could bring men to believe on him, of whom they have not heard.

It seems then to be manifest, that if God really purposes the final perseverance of believers, and if he intends to secure it in a manner suited to their intelligent and moral nature, there is a necessity for just such motives, as are found in the passages of Scripture to which I have alluded. Not that exhortations, or warnings, or any other means will, of themselves, insure the perseverance of believers. But they are an indispensable means of their perseverance. And if the divine Spirit causes them, *as rational beings*, to persevere in holy living, he must do it, so far as we can judge, by such motives as the word of God urges upon them — motives addressed to their reason, conscience and moral affections.

Ezek. 18: 24, is often quoted as an objection to our doctrine. "When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness

and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abomination which a wicked man doeth; shall he live? All his righteousness which he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass and in his sin, in them shall he die?" Most Calvinistic writers dispose of this text by saying, that the person intended by the prophet is not a saint in reality, but only in profession or appearance, and that such a one will be very likely to turn from his seeming goodness, and to perish in his guilt. But to what would this amount? If he turns from his seeming goodness, he will perish! And so he will if he does not turn. The form of godliness without the power, will not save him. The prophet knew that a man who had the appearance of righteousness without the reality, would perish, whether he turned from it, or not. Does not the whole discourse, taken together, plainly show that the prophet speaks of things as they are in the sight of God? The righteousness spoken of in v. 24, as well as that in v. 22, is evidently real and saving righteousness. And it seems to me that the argument of the objector must be obviated in another way, that is, by considering the statement of the prophet as merely *hypothetical*, designed to bring into view the impartial justice and goodness of God, and the fixed connection between righteousness and happiness, and between unrighteousness and misery. The statement shows, that if one of these exists, the other will exist as a consequence. But the statement does not imply that the thing supposed would ever really take place. So the Apostle says; "If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Dick, in his Theology, gives the following illustration of this hypothetical manner of speaking. "When a philosopher says, if a comet should impinge upon the earth, the earth would be burnt up, or driven from its orbit, he has no idea that his supposition will be realized. What then, it may be asked, is the use of such statements?" that is, such as those made by Ezekiel. Dick replies, "that while they point out the necessity of continuance in holiness to the attainment of final salvation, they are a means of exciting believers to watchfulness, diligence and prayer, and thus contribute to their perseverance in grace; — for

God deals with them as rational creatures, and works upon them by motives addressed to their hopes and their fears."

It is thought by those who deny the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, and by a few individuals who maintain it, that the passage in Heb. 6: 4 — 6 is also to be explained of real believers. But a careful attention to the passage and to other parallel texts must, I think, lead to a different conclusion. The manifest design of the writer is to describe certain persons who are not merely in a perishing condition, but in a *hopeless* condition — persons of whom it is not only true that they cannot be saved without repentance, but *who cannot be brought to repentance.* He does not say of unbelievers in general, nor even of all those who are, like Saul of Tarsus, among the chief of sinners, that it is impossible to renew them to repentance. He says it only of a particular class of sinners, namely, of those "who have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and *have fallen away.*" This is the exact rendering of the original, as any one who understands the Greek language may see. The writer does not interrupt his description of the persons intended by the word *if*, as our translators have done — "*if* they shall fall away." They "*have fallen away.*" This is one of the facts stated. It is then, I think, plain, that the writer had his eye upon what really occurred; that what he says was meant to be a description of persons actually existing; and that their falling away was mentioned not as a mere supposition, but as a well known fact, making a part of the character of those whose guilty and wretched condition he presented to view.

Dr. Dwight and others, with good reason, consider v. 8 as relating to the same persons just before described in v. 4 — 6. "But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Why did the writer speak thus in this place, unless it was to set forth, in another form, the character and end of the apostates whom he had in view, in contrast with the case of true believers, designated in v. 7. "For

the earth which drinketh in the rain, and bringeth forth herbs, etc., receiveth blessing from God." Such is the happy case of those who are faithful followers of Christ; and such is the woful case of those who fall away, after having enjoyed the distinguished favors described in v. 4 — 6.

The account given of the high privileges and the peculiar exercises of the persons to whom the sacred writer refers has, I think, been well explained by Dr. Owen, with whom almost all the evangelical commentators agree. The language employed to set forth the character of these persons is much like that which is elsewhere employed to set forth the character of real Christians. But it is here to be taken in a lower sense. Those who believe to the saving of the soul, have been enlightened and have tasted the good word of God, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, in one sense. Others may be said to be enlightened, and to have tasted the good word of God, etc., in another sense. A just interpretation of Scripture requires that we should in many instances give different significations to the same words and expressions. To believe, to escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ, to know the way of righteousness, to receive the word with joy — these and other similar phrases well express what is characteristic of those who are truly regenerated. But they are sometimes used in Scripture and in free religious discourse with an inferior signification, and are applied to those who are destitute of holiness. This variety of significations is demanded by the nature and circumstances of different cases. The language taken by itself, separate from the connection, and from other circumstances, is not sufficient to make known the meaning which the writer would convey. I leave it to you to carry out this general principle in reference to the passage under consideration, recommending particularly the exegetical and practical remarks of Owen in his Exposition.

V. 9 still further sustains the construction which I have given to v. 4 — 6. The writer says to those whom he addresses, "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Better things than

what? Why, better than the things he had mentioned, v. 4 — 6 and 8 — even things which accompany salvation — things appropriate to those who are saved. We are persuaded that you are followers of Christ and heirs of eternal life, "though we thus speak," — though we declare to you the miserable condition of those who abuse such distinguished favors — who have been exalted to heaven, but for their aggravated impiety shall be thrust down to hell. In the closing part of the chapter, the sacred writer keeps in view the case of those who have saving faith — who have laid hold of the hope set before them, in evident contradistinction to those who possess the highest privileges, the warmest affections and the most joyful hopes, without those "better things which accompany salvation."

In connection with this chapter, take Heb. 10: 26—29, 38, 39. "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. — Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, — and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace." Evidently the same general object is placed before us here as in ch. vi, that is, the woful condition of those who commit high-handed offences under the light of the gospel and the clear manifestations of redeeming love. At the close, after saying, "the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," he refers again very distinctly to the two classes of men, and to their conditions, in contrast with each other. "We are not of them who draw back to perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul." There *are those* who draw back to perdition. But we do not go with them. There are those who believe to the saving of the soul; and we belong to their number.

To make it still more evident, by a comparison of texts, that the writer to the Heb. ch. vi, meant to give a description of real apostates, such as then existed, and such as have often existed since, and to illustrate still further the methods by which different writers labor to excite salutary fear and watchfulness in believers, I shall cite what is written on the same subject, 2 Pet. 2: 20—22:

There can be no reasonable doubt, that he here describes persons who were actually found among those who had been regarded as converts in his day. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them, than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them," (he is speaking of a fact,) "it has happened unto them according to the true proverb; the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The persons here spoken of had "known the way of righteousness," and had "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ." Their illumination, their attainments, and their apparent goodness had been remarkable, though perhaps not equal to those described in Heb. 6: 4—6. But after having been thus enlightened and reformed under the influence of the Christian dispensation, they turned back to the pollutions of the world, and so were fitly represented by the proverb of the dog and the swine.

But a farther difficulty occurs. If it is a settled point that true believers never draw back to perdition, then why should we speak to them of the misdemeanors of those who have another and different character? What has the apostasy and the wretchedness of false professors to do with those who are steadfast and unmovable, being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?

Reply. As it is God's design that all the regenerate shall persevere in holiness, he appoints those dispensations of providence, and gives those instructions in his word, and those influences of his Spirit, which are suited to accomplish his gracious design. It would be exceedingly strange, if after he has purposed their perseverance, he should not use the proper means to secure it. In regard to the propriety of presenting before believers the case of apostates, I appeal to the Scriptures; and in regard to the utility

of it, I appeal to the good sense and experience of Christians. Of the propriety of presenting the case of apostates in this manner, the example of the inspired writers is decisive proof. Several striking instances occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In ch. iii the writer addresses his "holy brethren," who were "partakers of the heavenly calling," and he speaks solemnly to them of those who rebelled in the wilderness, and were not permitted to enter the promised land. And he makes that unhappy case the matter of earnest exhortation and warning to Christians, to guard against an evil heart of unbelief, and to take heed lest they should fall short of the heavenly rest. He repeats the exhortation and warning ch. 4: 11. As so many of the Israelites were excluded from the promised land by unbelief, let us, he says, labor to enter into the higher rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. See warnings of the same kind also in ch. vi and x. The Apostle Paul frequently addresses believers in a similar way. In 1 Cor. 10: 5—12, there is a remarkable instance of this, taken from the same example of the Israelites. "With many of them God was not well pleased; and they were overthrown in the wilderness." And the Apostle says, these things were intended as examples to the brethren whom he addressed, to warn them against similar transgressions and similar punishments. They were recorded as admonitions to Christians. And the Apostle makes this practical conclusion of the whole for the benefit of himself and his brethren. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We must then admit the propriety and the wisdom of this mode of exhorting and warning Christians, inasmuch as it has the sanction of the infallible word of God. And as to its practical utility, my appeal is to the good sense and experience of Christians. The representation which the Apostle gives of himself, shows how he regarded this matter. He labored, and strove, and fought; he kept under his body and brought it into subjection, lest, after preaching the gospel to others, he should be disapproved. And who that knows his own heart — who that has the humility of a Christian, and trembles at the word of God, can think of the apostasy of any

who once appeared among the followers of Christ, without being awakened to a salutary alarm, and to a watchful care to guard against all temptations to depart from the way of holiness. If any one who calls himself a Christian, finds himself unmoved by the admonitions of Scripture and by the examples of apostasy with which he is made acquainted — if he can wrap himself up in his own fancied strength and security, and say, what have I to do with warnings against backsliding and apostasy — why should I be told of danger, and exhorted to watch and fear and pray lest I should fall short of heaven, when I have an assurance of being kept to eternal life — if any one takes this ground and indulges these feelings, he gives us much cause to think that he has no part or lot in the religion of Christ. Believers will be affected by the examples and warnings referred to, in proportion as they know the treachery of their own hearts and the difficulties in the way to eternal life, and in proportion as they are advanced in piety, and are intent upon doing the will of God. Watchfulness, pious fear and trembling, and a desire to profit both by the happy end of the faithful and the unhappy end of hypocrites and unbelievers — these are among the obvious characteristics of the children of God.

Our opponents say that some real saints have apostatized; and they urge the passage in John 17: 12, as furnishing a striking example of this. Jesus says, "Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." This, it is said, implies, that one of those whom the Father gave to Christ, fell away and perished.

Reply. There is no reason to think that Judas was ever a real believer. We are told that Jesus knew his character from the beginning; that he made choice of twelve as witnesses, but one of them was "a devil." He chose Judas, not for his piety, but for other reasons. Important ends were evidently answered by the fact, that a subtle enemy, who had been intimately acquainted with his public and private life through the whole of his ministry, was at last constrained, by his own conscience, to give an open testimony to his innocence. These ends were undoubtedly designed, when Judas was chosen as one of the twelve.

The passage above cited, is interpreted by the best philologists in this way: "Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost; *but the son of perdition is lost.*" Other similar declarations of Christ require the same construction. He says, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias; but to none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow." This widow was not one of the widows in Israel. The meaning is, that the prophet was not sent to any of the widows in Israel, but was sent to a widow in Sidon. Again he says, "There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; but none of them were cleansed, save Naaman the Syrian." Naaman was not one of the lepers in Israel. The meaning is, that none of the lepers in Israel were cleansed, *but Naaman the Syrian was cleansed.* The text above cited respecting Judas, is clearly to be construed in the same manner. It appears from the whole history, that he was never a sincere friend and disciple of Christ. But Christ chose to let his hypocrisy remain unknown, till he revealed it by his own conduct. The text then has no relation to the perseverance of saints, inasmuch as Judas never was a saint.

Those who deny our doctrine produce other examples of believers who apostatized, as David, Solomon, Peter, Hymeneus, Alexander, Philetus and Demas. Now in regard to real saints, we allow that they may and do fall into great sins. What our doctrine implies is, that however great their sins, they will repent; that however grievous their falls, they will be raised up again; and that they will be preserved from final apostasy. As to those who have the mere form of godliness — their open and final apostasy is nothing strange, but is rather to be expected; and it is no more evidence against the perseverance of the saints, than the conduct of those who are denoted by the seed which fell on stony places, and whose falling away resulted from their wanting the principle of holiness. Of those who profess to be followers of Christ, but forsake the way of obedience and perish in their sins, the Apostle John gives a very satisfactory account. 1 John 2: 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they

had been of us, they would have continued with us." Their forsaking the right way made it *manifest*, he says, that they did not belong to the number of the faithful. If they had been of that number, they would have continued with them. The Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 11: 19, speaks of it as one of the ends which in the providence of God were answered by errors and disorders in the church, that they who were approved might be made manifest, in distinction from others. This is the case in all ages. Much is done by the influence of divine truth and the divine administration, to make a visible separation, even in this life, between the real friends of Christ, and those who are friends only in profession. The sum of the matter is this, that final perseverance in faith and obedience invariably accompanies true discipleship.

LECTURE CVI.

THE GREEK WORD *ἀνάστασις*, RENDERED RESURRECTION, USED IN DIFFERENT SENSES. RESURRECTION OF THE BODY. RESURRECTION A FUTURE EVENT.

In the present Lecture I shall consider the doctrine of the Resurrection.* Dr. Dwight thinks that the word *ἀνάστασις* is generally used in the New Testament to denote *a future state of existence*, without any particular reference to the resurrection of the body. It is evidently used in this more general and extensive sense in Matt. 22: 23—33. The Sadducees denied the *resurrection*, or as it is stated in Acts 23: 8; they said "there is no *resurrection*, *neither angel nor spirit.*" They rejected the idea of any state of existence beyond the present. It was in opposition to that infidel opinion of the Sadducees, that Jesus cited the declaration of God to Moses; "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" showing from this, that those patriarchs were in a living, conscious state, as "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The truth implied was, that none but holy, happy beings could stand in such a relation to God, and consequently that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of course other

* It would be suitable to follow the subject of the saints' perseverance with Lectures on the duty of growing in grace, on death, and on the intelligent, active existence of the soul in the intermediate state. But I have concluded to omit these topics in this publication, although I was accustomed to give them particular attention in the Lecture Room, — and to proceed to the doctrine of the *Resurrection.*

departed saints, existed as God's people in a state of intelligent activity and blessedness. The passage cited by Christ was perfectly suited to his object, and, in opposition to the Sadducees, clearly proved the spiritual and happy existence of good men after death. In this place, the word *ἀνάστασις* had a general sense, a sense corresponding with the object which Jesus had in view, that is, to expose the error of the Sadducees, and to establish the doctrine of a future state of retribution.

Here it is natural to inquire, how we can account for it that the word *ἀνάστασις* is used in different senses in different parts of the New Testament; in some places denoting the resurrection of the *body*, in other places taking the general sense of a conscious and happy existence of men after death. The solution which I offer, is grounded on a general principle of language, according to which a word varies in its signification as circumstances require, — sometimes conveying a sense more extensive, sometimes less extensive, — sometimes presenting a subject in one of its aspects, sometimes in another. Now it is to be understood as a settled point in the divine plan, that man exists now, and is to exist ultimately and forever, as a *complex being*, consisting of soul and body; that although the spiritual part may exist, and, for a time immediately subsequent to death, does exist without any connection with the body, the separation comes by way of exception to the general law of our nature, and is a grievous disorder consequent upon sin; that the separation is, however, only for a short period — a period hardly worthy to be named compared with the immortality which follows; that after this short interval, the evil occasioned by sin will be removed, death will yield up his prey, and man will exist in that complex state, in which he existed during his probation, and which the wisdom of his Creator appointed for him in the world of endless retribution. But the constituent parts of man's complex nature will harmonize; and as the souls of the saints will hereafter reach a perfection far above what is attained in the present life, their bodies will in like manner be refined and exalted, and be fitted for celestial employments and pleasures. Hence it was nothing strange that the

word *ἀνάστασις*, referring to man in the world to come, should sometimes respect his existence as a *spiritual* being, sustaining a near and happy relation to God; and should at other times respect him in his *corporeal* part, which is to be raised from the dead. When it is used in this last sense, as it generally is, it has the same signification as *ἔγερσις*.

The idea of our future existence, as intelligent and moral beings, has been common among mankind, even in heathen lands, and seems to result from the exercise of their rational and moral faculties. But the resurrection of the *body* appears to be a matter of pure revelation.

There is satisfactory reason to believe that the people of God, under the former dispensation, certainly the more enlightened of them, had a clear conception of *a resurrection of the body*. It appears that Abraham was not a stranger to this conception; for we are informed, that in the severe trial he was called to meet in the sacrifice of Isaac, on whose life so much depended, he found refuge and support in the belief that God was able to raise his son from the dead. He must have been more or less familiar with the conception of such an effect of the power of God, unless it was then for the first time suggested to his mind by a supernatural influence.

Instances of actual resurrection are mentioned, as remarkable achievements of faith, among the former saints. "Women received their dead raised to life again." Heb. 11: 35. And in the same verse it is said that "others were tortured, not accepting deliverance," and that they endured suffering for this purpose, "that they might obtain a *better resurrection*," — a resurrection to eternal life in heaven. And who can doubt that Isaiah believed in the doctrine of the resurrection, when he said, "He will swallow up *death* in victory;" and again, "Thy *dead men* shall live, together with my *dead body* shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out *her dead*." Who can doubt that Daniel believed the doctrine, when he said, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some

to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt?"

The New Testament reveals the doctrine with vastly greater clearness, and so may be said, comparatively, to have brought life and immortality to light. But my argument will rest on a few leading texts.

John 5: 25, "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live;" signifying that he would, during his present ministry, exercise his power in raising the dead; which in several instances he did. But in v. 28, 29, he proceeded to a larger view of the subject, and foretold the fact of a general resurrection. "Marvel not at this;" that is, at what he had just said, v. 25; — "for the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." In 1 Thess. 3: 12—17, the Apostle comforts believers by predicting the happy resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus; "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." He afterwards says, "the dead in Christ shall rise." In Phil. 3: 21, the Apostle says; "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body." 1 Cor. 6: 14, "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." The same is taught 2 Cor. 4: 14. But the subject is treated most particularly and fully in 1 Cor. xv. An error had made its appearance in the Corinthian church, which the Apostle undertook to refute, v. 12, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?" He then enters on a labored argument, to prove the resurrection of the saints from the resurrection of Christ; all along implying, that the relation of believers to Christ is so close and inseparable, that if Christ was raised, they will certainly be raised in like manner.

After this general view of the doctrine under consideration, I shall endeavor to set forth more particularly what revelation teaches, presenting the subject exactly in the light in which it is presented in the word of God, neither adding anything to it, nor taking anything from it.

1. The texts above quoted clearly teach, that there will be a resurrection of *the body*. In some of the texts the body is expressly mentioned. "With my *dead body* shall they live." "Who shall change our vile *body*." In all the texts this is implied. The *dead* shall live. All that are *in the graves* shall come forth. Those who *sleep* in Jesus shall awake. What Paul taught led some to inquire, "*how* are the dead raised, and with what *bodies* do they come?" Why should they have made this inquiry, had he not taught that there would be a resurrection of the *body?* And what is the answer he gives to their inquiry? Not that he had taught no such thing as the resurrection of bodies turned to dust; but that the bodies raised would be greatly altered from what they were in their former state; — not that dead bodies would not be raised, but that they would be raised in a superior condition. What does the history of the actual resurrections, which took place under both dispensations, teach? It teaches that in every instance, the resurrection mentioned was the restoring of a *dead body* to life. I speak now of the simple fact, not of the mode or circumstances of it. And I cannot conceive how any Christian, who honestly inquires after that which the inspired writers taught, can doubt that, in a true and proper sense, the bodies of men at the resurrection will be restored to life.

In what way did the people of God obtain an *idea* of resurrection? How did they learn what it was, except from the signification of the words employed to express it, and from the instances of actual resurrection with which they were acquainted? And what was in reality the idea which they entertained of it? What did Abraham understand by God's being able *to raise Isaac from the dead?* We are told that "women received their *dead*, raised to life again." What was the event referred to? And what was

their conception of it? What was the resurrection of Lazarus? And how did his sisters and friends understand it? The history of the case is given by the Evangelist. Lazarus was sick and died, and lay some days in the grave. Jesus went to the grave, and, in the presence of a multitude, said, "Lazarus, come forth." The dead man heard the voice of the Son of God, and came forth. *Who* or *what* came forth? It was Lazarus in his *bodily state;* in other words, it was the *body* of Lazarus. That which had been dead was raised to life again. The facts were plain, and all understood them alike. Come now to the resurrection of Jesus. He had repeatedly predicted his own resurrection. And his prediction was exactly accomplished. After his crucifixion, his body was laid in a tomb. On the morning of the third day, pious women went to the tomb to anoint his body, after the manner of the Jews; but his body was not there. He had risen from the dead. His disciples frequently saw him after his resurrection. They saw the print of the nails in his hands, and of the sword in his side. The evidence was such, that even Thomas, with all his incredulity, was convinced of the identity of the body. The resurrection body of Jesus was doubtless in a different state from what it was before his death. But it was a *body*, and it was *his* body, unless his disciples were all deceived by what they saw and heard and felt. If he had such a resurrection as Swedenborg supposes, he must have had two resurrections; one soon after his death, the other the third day after; one leaving his body still dead in the tomb where it was laid, the other being a resurrection of the dead body itself. It is too evident to be doubted, that the resurrection of Jesus, as described by the Evangelists, was very different from what the followers of the Swedish prophet understand by the resurrection of the dead. All that is said in the Scriptures of those who were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, shows plainly, that it was the resurrection of that real, visible thing, *his body*. A large number saw him after his resurrection, and conversed with him, and some of them "handled him with their hands." And unless his resurrection was such as answered to the common idea of that event, how could it have

been regarded as a proof of his Messiahship? Suppose he had been raised according to the doctrine above alluded to; that is, suppose at his death, his spirit had been separated from his body, accompanied with a subtle, ethereal organization invisible to mortals, except when made visible by a miracle; and suppose his real body had remained in the tomb, and had been anointed with the "spices and ointments" prepared, and had thus been preserved in a sound state, open to the inspection of friends and foes. On this supposition, how would it have been possible to verify his prediction concerning his resurrection? Who among the Jews, who even among his disciples, would ever have believed that he was risen from the dead? His enemies would have boasted of the evidence they had that his prediction was false, and that he was a deceiver. He had said that he should rise from the dead the third day. But he had not risen; for *there* was his dead body still, carefully preserved in the sepulchre of Joseph, where any one might see it. In this way the evidence would have been incontrovertible, that he had *not* risen from the dead; and his disciples would have been confounded, and would have been obliged to confess that their Lord and Master was an impostor;— and thus the fabric of Christianity would have crumbled into dust. If any one of the apostles had stood forth as a witness of Christ's resurrection, he would have belied his own conscience, and the voice of the whole community would have pronounced him a false witness. Whatever else is doubtful, this is certain, that such a resurrection as that above mentioned, was not the resurrection which Jesus predicted, and which actually took place in the fulfilment of his prediction; — it was not what Jesus, or his disciples, or the Jewish nation, understood by the word *resurrection*. Unless the resurrection of Christ had been widely different from the one referred to — unless there had been a resurrection of that very body of Jesus which was laid in the sepulchre — the angel would not have said to the women who went so early to anoint the body, "He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Unless there had been such a resurrection of the body of Jesus, there would have been no firm basis

on which to rest the truth of his claims as the Messiah, and the authority of the religion which he taught.

As the resurrection of Jesus is set forth not only as the proof, but as the *pattern*, of the resurrection of his followers; we must regard all that belonged to his resurrection, as belonging also to theirs. We should naturally conclude that the resurrection of the saints will be the resurrection of their bodies from the meaning of the word, and from the various instances of actual resurrection which are mentioned in the history of both dispensations, and from which the most definite idea of resurrection was derived. The texts which have been cited, and others which might be cited, teach our doctrine with great clearness. What other construction can be put upon the language of the sacred writers, and upon the facts and circumstances which they relate? Speculative men may strike out a theory of resurrection from their own reason or fancy, or from the opinions or conjectures of others. But if we seek to know what the Scriptures teach, and what was in the minds of the inspired writers, how can we avoid the conclusion which has here been adopted? But the evidence of our doctrine which appears most clear and conclusive is found in the resurrection of Jesus. There is, as we have seen, perfect demonstration, that the resurrection of Jesus was the resurrection of his body. And the Scriptures teach, that the resurrection of his followers will be *like* his; that they will be raised from the dead *as he was*, and will have a body like to the body which he had after his resurrection, — a body like to his glorious body.

2. There is another point to be particularly noticed, namely, that *the resurrection of the dead is set forth in the Scriptures as a future event*. It is *foretold* of all who sleep in Jesus, and of all who are in the graves, that they shall be raised from the dead. This view of the resurrection, which is so different from the teaching of Swedenborg, is revealed with perfect clearness both in the Old Testament and the New. How can any one doubt that the prophets and apostles and Christ himself had this conception of it? If it is a truth that the resurrection of every man takes place at or very near the time of his death; it is evi-

dently a truth which never entered into the minds of the inspired writers. For they were honest men, and in their writings expressed, as clearly as language could do, the conceptions of their own minds. And if they had regarded the resurrection, as the writer above mentioned did, they certainly would have told us so. But they have told us the contrary. The main question then for us to answer is, whether our faith is to rest on the holy Scriptures, or on the writings of Swedenborg. For see how the subject of resurrection is treated in the passage before cited, John 5: 28, 29. "The hour *is coming*, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." If it had been the fact, when Jesus spoke these words, that those who were constantly dying were immediately raised from the dead, and that all who had previously died and had been laid in the graves, had experienced the resurrection; what sense did he convey to his hearers when he spoke of the resurrection of all who *had* died and of those who should die, as what was to take place at a future time? The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves *shall* rise! — while all who were then in the graves, *had* already risen, and not one of them was to experience any other resurrection! The disciples of Swedenborg hold to a spiritual sense of Scripture; but they hold also to a literal sense, as the basis of the spiritual. They doubtless believe that Christ really and literally died, and was literally laid in a sepulchre; and that men literally die. What then is the literal sense of the passage above cited? What is it for those who are in the graves to come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of condemnation, in the *literal* sense? And what is it for them to come forth in the *spiritual* sense?

1 Thess. 4: 16, 17. To comfort believers respecting "those who are asleep," meaning Christians who had died, the Apostle informs them, that "as Jesus died and rose again, *even so*," that is, after the manner of Christ's resurrection, God will raise up his people from a state of death, and bring them with Jesus. In

connection with this, the Apostle speaks of those who will be alive at the coming of Christ, and says, that they will not be received to glory before those who are asleep. "For the Lord shall descend from heaven, — and the dead in Christ shall rise *first*," that is, previously to the ascension; and then those who are raised from the dead, together with those who are changed, "shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall be ever with the Lord." The events here mentioned were all *future*, *equally future*. You may as well say, the change of the living saints had already taken place, or was then constantly taking place, as that the resurrection of the dead had been taking place in all past time. And if you deny that these things were spoken of as future, you may as well deny that anything was ever spoken of as future, and that no possible forms of speech can make known any events which are to take place in time to come, and that all the predictions, that is, the *seeming* predictions of the sacred writers, made known nothing but what had already occurred, or was constantly occurring. And if you do this, you may as well carry the thing through, and affirm that language is without meaning or use.

Phil. 3: 20, 21, is a passage of the same import. "But our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, — who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body." 2 Cor. 4: 14, "Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and present us with you." From these two passages it appears, that the Apostle first recurred to the resurrection of Jesus the third day, and then looked forward to the resurrection of the dead at the coming of Christ, when their bodies would be fashioned like to his glorious body, that is, the body which he had after his resurrection, and with which his disciples saw him ascend to heaven.

The *futurity* of the resurrection of the dead is taught very clearly in 1 Cor. xv. The Apostle, speaking of the resurrection, says; "Every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." The resurrection of Christ the third day after his death, was past. The resur-

rection of his people after the pattern of his, was future. It was to take place when he would bring his mediatorial kingdom to its consummation and close, and would put all his enemies under his feet, and when the living saints would be changed instead of dying. These texts correspond with the other texts quoted, and show with all conceivable plainness, that the resurrection of the dead will come to pass at a *future time.*

I insist upon this point as of essential importance, in opposition to the doctrine on which I have animadverted. If that doctrine be true, then all those who had died before Paul wrote, had already risen from the dead; and the Apostle committed a great mistake in charging Hymeneus and Philetus with error, in saying that the resurrection was already past: for according to the doctrine alluded to, the resurrection of the unnumbered millions who had died from the beginning of the world, *was* past; and so far Hymeneus and Philetus were right, in opposition to the teaching of Paul. But if the opinion of Hymeneus and Philetus was erroneous, so was the opinion of Swedenborg, who held that the resurrection of all who had died before his time, was already past. Hence, in regard to the time of the resurrection, the main question seems to be, whether we shall be followers of Hymeneus and Swedenborg, or followers of Christ and the apostles.

One of the questions which has been most sharply debated among Christians in regard to the resurrection, is, whether the *same body* will be raised. Dr. Dwight says; "All the difficulties which attend this subject are derived — either from extending our philosophical inquiries beyond the power of the understanding — or from neglecting to settle what we intend by *sameness.*" Now if we duly reverence the sacred writers and repose implicit confidence in their instructions, we must, I think, come to the following conclusions. First; that the resurrection will be *a resurrection of the body;* and secondly, that *the bodies of the saints, when raised from the dead, will be very different from what they were in the present life.*

As to the *first* point, we have seen that the *body* of Jesus was

raised, and that the resurrection of believers is to be conformed to his. Paul represents objectors as asking, "how are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?" And though they put the question in such a cavilling spirit as called forth his rebuke, he still gave an answer, and taught as far as was practicable, how the dead are raised, and with what bodies they come. The body will be raised, as the body of Jesus was. But the body will be greatly altered. This is the

Second point mentioned. The resurrection body will be exceedingly different from what it was in the former state. The body of every saint will be *his* body, and will be recognized as such. This is sufficient as to the question of identity. The body of each one will be *his* body, and he and others will see it to be so. It will be none the less a *body*, and none the less *his* body, because it will be so altered. A man who is raised up from severe sickness to health, has substantially the same body which was lately emaciated on his sick bed; but, in many respects, how altered! The alteration in the resurrection body, the Apostle describes. And the description is sufficiently plain, and gives us as clear a conception of the resurrection body, as we can expect to attain in the present life. And if any one should make out a description more particular and exact, and more gratifying to the cravings of curiosity, would it not be likely to have more of conjecture, than of fact — more of fiction, than of truth?

The Apostle, before entering upon his description, refers to the difference between the grain which dies in the ground, and the stalk and grain which spring up from it. He refers also to celestial bodies, and terrestrial bodies, which are widely different from each other in glory. This prepares the way for him to set forth the difference between the body as it will be at the resurrection, and as it was when it was committed to the dust. He shows what a new character it wears. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." In the present life, the body is liable to disease, and tends to decay and dissolution, and finally turns to corruption and dust. But when raised from the dead, the body will be free from sickness, decay and death, and will be forever incorruptible

and immortal. — "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." At the resurrection, it will be rid of all infirmity and weakness, and will be endued with an unfailing energy and activity, which will prepare it for a higher sphere, and render it capable of going through with the sublime and ceaseless employments of the heavenly world, without weariness or need of rest, and with perfect alacrity and delight. In that better world, holy love, worship and obedience will be rest and joy to the saints. They will be strong in mind and strong in body, like those celestial beings "who excel in strength."

"It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." In the present state the body is base and uncomely, compared with the beauty and glory with which it will be invested at the resurrection, and which will fit it for the company of the excellent and glorious in heaven.

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." The Apostle does not say, the resurrection body is *spirit*. This would be inconsistent with its being a *body*. But it will be a *spiritual body*. It will, as we may say, be *spiritualized* — will be endued with something of a spiritual quality, and so be fitted for the spiritual world. The natural body, that is, flesh and blood in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It is not adapted to such a state. It cannot hear the music of heaven. It cannot relish the pleasures of heaven. It would faint and die at the sight of the glory of God. "Corruption cannot inherit incorruption."

Such is the instruction which the Scriptures give on the present subject. And such is the amount of what we know, or can know, in the present imperfect world. — There will be a resurrection of the dead. The body will be raised, but will be very different from what it is in this life. It will not consist of flesh and blood in a corruptible state, as it does while on earth. It will be incorruptible, powerful, glorious, and spiritual, adapted to the employments and pleasures of the heavenly world. The same will be the condition of the bodies of those saints, who will remain on earth at the coming of Christ. They will undergo a change, and will become incorruptible, powerful, glorious and spiritual.

You must have observed, that in all the passages which have been quoted from the Epistles, the inspired writer had his eye upon the resurrection of *believers*. He speaks of the resurrection of Christ, and of those who are *his*. He speaks of the resurrection of those who "sleep *in Jesus*," and of "the *dead in Christ*," and of a resurrection which will be glorious and happy. But in Matt. 25: 28, 29, in Dan. 12: 2, and in the Apocalypse, the general resurrection is very clearly foretold.

I shall close this free discussion of the subject with a few remarks of a practical nature.

1. It is a remarkable fact, that while the inspired writers labor so assiduously to give us all the instruction which is adapted to be really useful to us, *they do little to satisfy our curiosity*. There is no end to the questions which may arise in the minds of speculative men.—What is the exact condition of the souls of men in the disembodied state? How do they see and know, and how do they converse with each other? How do they differ from what they were in this life, and from what they will be after the resurrection? What became of Lazarus and those who rose from the dead at Jerusalem near the time of Christ's resurrection? Did they die twice, and will they have a second resurrection? When the dead are raised with refined and incorruptible bodies, and the living saints are changed, will the grosser elements of their bodies be separated and left behind, or be transmuted and sublimated so as to be fitted for a higher mode of being? And how was it in these respects with the resurrection body of Jesus? What is the case with those bodies which have been devoured by animals, or consumed by fire, or perished upon the surface of the earth? How can the particles which composed their bodies be collected together from all parts of the world at the resurrection, and constitute, in whole or in part, those bodies to which they once belonged? Such questions may be multiplied indefinitely; and the best thing we can do in reply, may be to repeat the significant words which Paul used in a similar case; "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Such

inquiries do not concern us. If they could be answered, the answer would contribute nothing to our present or future well-being. But they relate to matters beyond the reach of our intelligence, and cannot be answered. Happy they, who are content with the word of God; who believe and practise what is revealed; and who are thus secured against doubt and perplexity, and filled with light and comfort!

2. Those who deny the common doctrine of the future resurrection of the dead, and maintain that all who have died in past time have already had their resurrection, and that all men have it near the time of their death, — those who maintain this are chargeable with exalting the speculations of philosophy or the visions of enthusiasm above the authority of the inspired writers. There are few instances, in which men who entertain a serious regard for revelation, deviate so widely from its obvious truths, and so palpably neglect its instructions.

Finally. Those who imbibe the spirit of the sacred writers, must regard the resurrection as *a great blessing*. Who can suppose that God would have done so much to reveal it, and to assure us that he will exert his omnipotence to accomplish it, had he not viewed it as a matter of great moment to his people? And unless inspired men regarded it in this light, why did they hold it up as an object of joyful expectation to believers? The happiness of the saints in the presence of their Saviour must be indescribably great in the interval between death and the resurrection. But it will doubtless be augmented by the resurrection. To attain to the highest good of which we are capable, we must, it would seem, be *perfectly human beings*. And how can any one be *perfectly human*, without a soul and body united? The separation of the soul and body by death is the consequence of sin. But Christ will deliver his people from sin and from all its consequences. This deliverance will be completed at the resurrection, when they will exist in their two-fold nature, that is, with soul and body happily united, the soul perfect in holiness, and the body incorruptible, complete in all its powers

and sensibilities, and fitted to cooperate with the soul in all that will be done and enjoyed in the world of glory. Such, I apprehend, is the doctrine of Scripture. And the faith of Christians will be correct and their joy will be full, if they receive the doctrine with simplicity and meekness, going as far as Scripture goes, and stopping where it stops, and looking at the resurrection in its own divine light as an object of desire and joyful expectation during their mortal life, and as an event which will illustriously display the infinite power and benevolence of God.

How different from these views of the Apostle and primitive Christians, are those expressed by the celebrated German philosopher, Kant, who thinks it can be no kind of advantage to us, that a body, however improved, "should be dragged after us through all eternity." With the same anti-Christian spirit, he might also vilify the wisdom and goodness of our Creator in giving and preserving to us a body during our present life. How low must have been his conceptions of the marvellous work of God in creating our bodies, and his still more marvellous work in raising them from the slumbers of the grave, and making them like to the glorious body of Christ! And what a reckless spirit does any man manifest, who can look without admiration, and even with contempt, upon God's workmanship in the structure of the human body, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made, which is such an honor to the perfections of God, and which in its incorruptible state is destined to be an essential part of man's happy and glorious existence in the world to come.

We find that the Apostle regarded the resurrection not only as an object of cheerful hope, but as a motive to the diligent discharge of duty. Immediately after he had finished his account of the resurrection, representing it as the final victory which Christ would give his people over the powers of evil, he applied it to a practical use. "Therefore, my beloved brethren,"—"therefore," that is, seeing you look for such an event

as the coming of Christ and the completion of his glorious victory in the resurrection of his people from the dead, — "therefore — be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

LECTURE CVII.

THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT DEFENDED AGAINST THE OBJECTIONS OF JOHN FOSTER.

It would be a very pleasing employment, to join with Howe and Watts, and other uninspired writers, and especially with those who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, in contemplating the happiness of the saints in glory. When the believer takes into view the holy employments and pleasures of the heavenly world, as made known by God's word and Spirit, he spontaneously exclaims, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." But I shall pass from this subject to one which is far less pleasing, but which, for obvious reasons, calls for a more particular consideration. The future punishment of the wicked has been made a subject of much controversy among those who profess to believe the Scriptures. And as the whole subject has a direct bearing upon our personal interests, and upon the interests of our friends and fellow creatures, and as it thus comes in contact with our self-love, and with all our benevolent and sympathetic affections, it is exceedingly difficult for us to pursue the consideration of it without some improper bias, and a consequent exposure to erroneous judgments. They therefore must be considered as very highly favored of God, who can proceed in the investigation of this subject from right motives, and on just and Scriptural principles. And one thing to be constantly kept in mind is, that it does not belong to us to contrive the plan of the universe, or to settle the principles of the divine government, but to learn from the word

and providence of God what those principles are; just as we study natural science, not to fix or improve the laws of nature, but to find out what those laws are.

The sacred writers generally set forth the future punishment of the wicked in figurative language. And they evidently do this, because such language is best adapted to express their own vivid conceptions of the evil to be endured, and to awaken just conceptions of it in the minds of others. It is nothing uncommon for guilty men to attempt to relieve themselves of the painful apprehension of future misery by the idea, that the terrific language of Scripture which describes it, is not to be understood literally. Whereas no words used in their literal sense, could do justice to the awful subject, or adequately make known the strong impressions of the writers. And it is apparent that no single metaphor could fully answer the purpose. The sacred pen-men therefore use a great variety of metaphorical language, derived from the most terrific objects in nature, for the purpose of teaching us that the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked is inexpressibly dreadful. Such is evidently their object; and such should be our object, whenever we quote their language.

But it is an obvious fact, that while the inspired writers present the subject before us as a reality of the gravest moment, they do not attempt, by a minute description, to give us any exact conceptions of the particular nature and mode of the penal inflictions which the enemies of God will hereafter endure. With that wisdom which is profitable to direct, they leave the subject wrapped up in an indefiniteness and awful mysteriousness, which is obviously adapted to guard our minds against an unbefitting familiarity, and to inspire us with an active and enduring dread of the threatened evil.

Many authors of eminent qualifications have successfully defended the common doctrine of the Christian church on the present subject, and have clearly shown the inconclusiveness of the arguments urged against it. It is not therefore necessary for me to bring forward in detail the evidence which Scripture affords in support of the doctrine of endless punishment. I shall here pursue the discus-

sion with reference to a specific object. A letter was written by the celebrated John Foster in the year 1841, and afterwards published, on the subject now under consideration. In that letter the popular arguments against the common doctrine are exhibited in the most impressive and touching manner. The thoughts suggested in the letter, together with the influence of the author's name, are adapted to unsettle the faith of multitudes. At the present day, when there is in the public mind extensively so remarkable a proneness to question long-established truths, to undervalue the clearest evidence, and to look with favor upon opinions directly contrary to the teachings of revelation, a letter written by so gifted an author in so eloquent and attractive a manner, must be expected to produce a sensible effect upon the interests of religion. And there is another circumstance which increases the dangerous tendency of such a letter, namely, that, although the writer's disbelief of so important a doctrine was long known, it was treated not only with lenity and indulgence, but even with apparent indifference, by his Christian and ministerial brethren, and seemed not at all to affect his reputation or influence as an orthodox man. For the purpose of vindicating the cause of truth, I have therefore concluded to subject the leading points touched upon in this letter, to a careful but brief examination, and thus, as far as may be, to assist inquirers after the truth in rightly estimating the value of the considerations which the letter contains, — which are in fact the very considerations that have most weight in the minds of men against the common doctrine.

I shall set forth what I consider as mistakes of the author, under two general heads: *first, mistakes as to the use of reason; second, mistakes as to feeling.*

First, as to *reason.* Here it is evident, that our author commits a great mistake, in looking upon human reason, as a competent judge of the divine administration. He imposes upon reason a task which it is by no means able to perform. And after committing this primary mistake, he proceeds, in an incorrect use of his reason, to frame sophistical arguments, and to draw conclusions which are manifestly unwarrantable.

The most plausible argument which human reason has ever framed against the doctrine of endless punishment, is derived from a consideration of the divine benevolence. And this is the argument which our author makes most prominent in the letter before us. As to the belief of the doctrine under consideration, he says, "I acknowledge my inability (I would say it reverently) to admit this belief together with a belief in the divine goodness — the belief that God is love, that his tender mercies are over all his works."* The argument is, that the final happiness of all intelligent beings must, in the view of reason, follow from the benevolence of God; that his goodness will not admit of the endless misery of any of his creatures.

In the discussion of this subject, the following things may be laid aside as not belonging to the question at issue, because they are admitted by our author, and by others who reject the common doctrine, as well as by those who maintain it. 1. *That God is infinitely benevolent.* This, being held by both parties in the controversy, makes no part of the subject in debate. 2. It is admitted by both parties, that the Scriptures are divinely inspired. 3. It is agreed, *that sin exists.* Accordingly it does not belong to me, any more than to my opponents, to account for the introduction of sin, or to prove its existence to be consistent with the goodness of God. 4. It is agreed, *that man is a moral, accountable being, under law, and is blame-worthy when he transgresses.* 5. It is agreed, *that the penalty which God has affixed to the law, is just, and of course may be justly executed upon the transgressor.* Our author frequently asserts, that sinners deserve to suffer a severe punishment and that for a long time, according to the penalty of the law. 6. It is agreed that all the sufferings which are actually endured by sinners are consistent with the divine perfections — that whenever endured, they are in conformity with the justice and benevolence of the Supreme Being.

These things then, are not to be debated. So far we have common ground. What then is the point in controversy? It is

* See the Letter, in the Life and Correspondence of John Foster by J. E. Ryland, London, 1846, vol. II., pp. 404—416. See also pp. 444—448.

not whether God is good, nor whether man is a sinner and deserves punishment, nor whether God is just and good in punishing; but simply, whether the punishment will be without end. We hold the affirmative, our author the negative. We ground our belief on the declarations of Scripture. Our author would consider the Scriptures as satisfactorily teaching the doctrine of endless punishment, did not his views of the divine benevolence prevent. As to ourselves, whatever difficulties arise in our minds respecting the consistency of endless punishment with the goodness of God, we overcome them by our regard to the teachings of Scripture. Our author sets aside these plain teachings, by the opinion he entertains of the divine goodness. He says, "The language of Scripture is *formidably strong;* so strong, that it must be an argument of extreme cogency that would authorize a limited interpretation." And what is the argument "which presses irresistibly upon his mind?" He says, it does not arise from any "incidental expressions of Scripture," or from "any passages dubiously cited in favor of final, universal restitution." That is, it does not arise from any texts in favor of universal salvation. "It is the *moral argument.*" He is overwhelmed with the dreadfulness of a punishment which is absolutely endless, and concludes that the goodness of God will certainly prevent it. This is the main argument on which he relies, and which he thinks so cogent, that it authorizes him to give a limited interpretation to the language of Scripture which is so "formidably strong."

Here then we come upon one of the chief mistakes of our author, namely, his *looking upon human reason as qualified by its own light, to judge of the divine administration.* I acknowledge that, if we were put to the task of determining by our own reason, independently of revelation, whether the punishment of men for the sins of the present life will be endless, we should in all probability decide in the negative. But it would be manifest presumption for any man to attempt to do this. No human being, how great soever the strength of his reason, is competent to the task. To enable a man to judge safely and truly on such a momentous subject as this, he must have the following qualifications. He must comprehend

the whole of the intrinsic malignity and vileness of sinning against such a being as God, of hating his character and attempting to sully his glory. He must comprehend the whole amount of happiness which sin aims or tends to destroy, and the whole of the mischief which it aims or tends to do among intelligent beings. He must fully comprehend the bearing which God's treatment of sin will have upon the interests of the universe, consisting of so many millions of worlds, — interests which are so dear to the heart of a benevolent Creator and a righteous Governor, and which he will be sure to promote. It will not be sufficient for him to be acquainted with benevolence, and to know how it operates, in the mind of man, in the mind of a father, a citizen, a legislator, and a judge. He must know what benevolence is in the mind of *God*, what *perfect* benevolence is in distinction from *imperfect*, and what *infinite* benevolence is in distinction from *finite*. He must know infallibly what punishment will be *just*, that is, what will correspond exactly with the ill-desert of sinners, and at the same time what will promote the welfare of God's moral kingdom, which is the object of his benevolence. In other words, he must know how justice and benevolence are united in the divine administration. He must comprehend infinite perfection, and must know how infinite perfection will act itself out in a moral empire, which is so boundless in extent, and is to endure forever. All these qualifications would be necessary to enable a man to form a right judgment as to the duration of future punishment. But no man, not even John Foster, with his brilliant imagination and his profound understanding, has any one of these necessary qualifications. "Who," says the Scripture, — "who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been his counsellor?" The things of a man, according to the Apostle, may be known by the spirit of man which is in him. But the things of *God* can be known only by the Spirit of God. What should we say, if in a Court of Justice we should see an ignorant man proudly place himself in the seat of the Judge, and undertake to pass sentence upon complicated questions of law, brought forward for adjudication? But how much more obvious is the arrogance and folly of

any man, who undertakes to pronounce judgment upon those who sin against God, and to decide upon the punishment which they shall suffer. When our author undertook this, he was out of his place. It is God's to reign. It is man's to submit. It is God's to pass sentence upon the transgressors of his law. It is man's to learn from the Holy Scriptures, and by and by from the decisions of the last day, what the sentence of God will be.

It is in this way I now meet the argument of our respected author. His argument is, that the infinite benevolence of God will, in his view, certainly prevent the endless punishment of sinners. My reply is, that no man is qualified to form a judgment on this subject. The wisest man on earth would go beyond his province, if he should undertake to do this. For the wisest man is of yesterday. And, though he may know how the limited benevolence of the human mind will be likely to operate; what means has he of knowing what *infinite* benevolence will do, or will not do? How does he know what is necessary to give support to law and justice in God's intelligent universe? Does any man possess any one of the qualifications which are necessary to prepare him to judge on such a subject? And if he attempts to judge, is it not to be expected, that his judgment will differ widely from the infallible judgment of God? If a little child should be asked, what shall be the punishment of a man who fraudulently writes a note; he would doubtless answer very differently from a wise legislator or a just judge.

This method of solving the difficulty, which is apt to arise in our minds respecting the endless duration of punishment, appears not only short and easy, but just and proper. I at once say to myself, it is a subject which lies beyond the reach of my faculties. I am not qualified to judge; and I therefore refer it, as I do other subjects, to him who cannot err, and whose ways are all just and true. If he has made known his judgment in his word, I will endeavor to learn what it is, and will quietly acquiesce in it, being sure of its rectitude. And if the truth on this or any other subject is not revealed in the word of God, I will cheerfully leave it, with all the unseen interests involved in it, to the decision

of his righteous and omniscient mind. How short and easy would this method have been to our author! And from what told and untold doubts and difficulties, from what painful struggles and agonies of mind, and from what perilous conclusions would it have preserved him! And what peace would it have imparted to him, — peace passing all understanding, flowing from his distrust of his own wisdom, and his implicit and unwavering confidence in God!

But the essential error which I have charged upon this distinguished author, calls for more particular consideration.

His argument against the endless punishment of the wicked, is grounded in part on the idea, that such punishment would be beyond the desert of sin. Perhaps I ought to say, it is grounded on this idea chiefly. For I suppose he would not consider endless punishment as inconsistent with the goodness of God, if sin were so great an evil as really to deserve it. Surely God, as a good Ruler, may properly inflict a punishment on offenders equal to their demerit. On the other hand, we are sure the punishment will never exceed the demerit of the offence. The ill-desert of sin is then a material point in this discussion. And here I allege, as before, that our author commits a palpable mistake in undertaking to judge on a subject which so far transcends the limits of the human mind. And it is not strange that so presumptuous an undertaking should result in an erroneous judgment. For who ever took upon himself to perform a work for which he was essentially unqualified, without being exposed to continual mistakes, and to an unsuccessful issue? It is clear, that one who is competent to form a correct opinion of the real demerit of sin, must have a perfect discernment of what sin is in itself, and in all its relations and influences. He must know all its intrinsic malignity and vileness. He must know the relation of sin to the soul, and the whole of those immortal interests which it tends to destroy. He must know its relation to God, and how great an evil it is to feel and act out enmity to so great and good and glorious a Lawgiver and Ruler. He must know the relation of sin to a world

and a universe of intelligent creatures, and its aim and tendency to propagate its own pollution among them, and to spread disorder and ruin far and wide. All this and more must any one know, and know perfectly, before he can be considered competent to form a right judgment of the whole demerit of sin. For surely the demerit, the ill-desert of sin, must be in proportion to its own intrinsic evil, and its natural aim and tendency to sully the glorious perfections of God, and to destroy the blessedness of immortal souls. And the punishment which is required must be correspondent with this intrinsic malignity of sin, and must be sufficient to counteract its deleterious bearing upon the moral creation, and in the end to turn it from a ruinous to a beneficial result. Who among mortals, who among angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, has so clear and complete a conception of this whole subject, that he can look upon himself as a competent judge, or can with any show of propriety rely upon the deductions of his own reason?

It appears moreover, that man not only falls so far short of the clearness and extent of knowledge which is necessary in the case before us, but is essentially *disqualified* by his *evil inclinations*. A perfectly competent judge in regard to the demerit of sin, must be entirely free from prejudice, and must have a holy as well as an omniscient mind. Now man, every man, is a sinner. And if he undertakes to judge of the ill-desert of the sinner, he undertakes to judge of his *own* ill-desert. And thus being not only destitute of the requisite knowledge, but subject to self-interest, and partiality, and the blinding influence of a depraved heart, can he be expected to judge righteous judgment? Is it not strange that we should ever be unmindful of that sound maxim, that *no man is to judge in his own case?* Whoever takes upon him to decide on the guilt of sin, must be supposed to be conscious that his decision has a bearing upon himself; and even if he should seem to forget himself, it would still be true, that his spiritual discernment has been obscured by sin, and that his judgment is liable to be influenced by his earthly and selfish inclinations. If he is a *good* man, he has indeed been convinced

of sin, and has seen its criminality, especially in himself. But he has seen this only in part, and has never, in his best frames, been wholly free from the effect of sin in darkening the understanding and blunting the moral sensibilities. So that, if he comes to the work of judging, it must be not only with very defective knowledge, but with dispositions and feelings, which disqualify him for the work.

It is moreover manifest, that our author not only puts reason to perform a work to which it is incompetent, but that in the use he actually makes of reason, he is chargeable with mistakes which reason itself can easily detect. For example, he infers from the shortness of the time occupied in committing sin, that the duration of its penal consequence must be limited; in other words, that there must be some proportion between the length of time spent in sinning, and the length of time spent in suffering. He reasons that endless misery cannot be "a just infliction for a few short, sinful years on earth."

The falsity of the principle here asserted may be made evident, by referring to events which take place under the divine constitution in the present life. How often does a single violation of moral law involve the offender in a long series of sufferings, extending to the end of life! For one act of wickedness, begun and ended in a few moments, a man may be deprived of all that is dear to him on earth, and be condemned to perpetual imprisonment, or, what is more dreadful still, to a painful and ignominious death. This mode of retribution, which God has appointed, and which has been regarded as just by the wise and good, shows that the chief criminality of an offender may have little to do with the time spent in committing the offence, and that we can by no means conclude that punishment must be limited in its duration because of the short duration of the offence. And yet some one may cry out against the injustice of such a principle, and say, what! subject a man to the loss of all the comforts of life, and to severe sufferings fifty or sixty years, for the act of a few moments! But it must be so; and justice, both human and divine, approves the measure, and may appoint the longest penal

infliction for the shortest criminal deed. The principle holds especially in God's moral government. To discredit the common doctrine, our author exclaims, rather rhetorically, "Millions of ages for each evil thought or word!" But we are not to be governed by exclamations. Do we doubt that angels were banished from heaven, and doomed to suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire," for one act, the very first act of rebellion? And do we doubt that there was an evil in that one brief act, which rendered such a retribution just? Do we not know that for "one offence," *one single act of disobedience*, committed in a few moments, Adam, in the morning of his existence, was excluded forever from Paradise, and that the "one offence," which some may think so small, brought penal evils upon him, and upon the countless millions of his posterity, which no tongue can describe and no finite understanding fully conceive? Verily God's thoughts in regard to the ill-desert of sin are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways. Thus our author commits a general mistake, by attempting to determine by his own reason what is or what is not the ill-desert of sin, and then by an evidently wrong use of reason, he falls into various particular mistakes.

It seems not to have occurred to him, that the exclamation above cited, which is so fitted to make an impression unfavorable to the common doctrine, may be turned against himself, and may be used to discredit what he himself believes. For he holds that the punishment of the wicked in the future world will be of a very long continuance. He says, as we have already noticed, that "the language of Scripture on the subject is *formidably strong*, and that nothing would authorize a limited interpretation, but an argument of extreme cogency." He says, too, "There is a force in the expressions of Scripture, at which we may well tremble; that on no allowable interpretation do they signify less than a very protracted duration and formidable severity." The most he dares to hope is, that the terms everlasting, eternal, forever, "are used to magnify and aggravate rather than define, and do not mean a strictly endless duration." He seems to agree with Dr. Hartley and other respectable writers, who entertain the pleasing

idea, that all sinful beings will finally be restored to holiness and happiness, but believe that their punishment will be for millions of ages, even so long that, in popular speech, it may justly be said to be everlasting, forever and ever. Now many persons, less serious and less mindful of the authority of Scripture than our author, will be very likely to exclaim, — *What! thousands of years, yea millions of ages spent in misery for the sins of a short life, perhaps very short! Who can believe this, and yet believe in the goodness of God?* The discerning eye of Foster perceived the formidable severity, the inexpressible dreadfulness of future punishment, taken even in this limited sense, and he trembled in view of it. But in this case his reverence for the word of God raised him above the difficulty, and induced a serious belief of the tremendous truth, although he was totally unable to make out a rational proof that sin is so enormous an evil as to deserve such a recompense. How happy would it have been, had he acted on the same principle in the other case, and had cherished such a reverence for the holy Scriptures, as to induce a cordial belief in a doctrine which they plainly teach, though he was unable to comprehend the whole evil of sin, or to see how the doctrine of Scripture can be reconciled with God's moral perfections. How happy, if he had kept in lively remembrance, that the human understanding does not measure things as the divine understanding does; if, instead of taking upon himself to judge by his own rational faculties what God can or cannot consistently do, he had exercised a filial confidence in God's rectitude and goodness in regard to the future punishment of transgressors. How happy, finally, would our author have been, if in view of the most gloomy and dreadful disclosures of revelation respecting the future state of the wicked, he could have possessed the posture of mind which the Psalmist had when he said; "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice. *Clouds and darkness are round about him; justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*"

But I have not done with this point. Our author, we have seen, looked upon the doctrine of *endless* punishment as dismal and appalling. And I have remarked, that the doctrine of severe

penal inflictions for thousands and millions of years, must also have appeared to him dismal and appalling, and not easily reconciled with his notions of the demerit of sin and the moral attributes of God. And how is it with the evils consequent upon sin in the present world, which, but for the existence of sin, had been a Paradise for mankind through all their countless generations? What is the miserable condition to which they are actually doomed? Of all this our author draws a very dark picture. He says to one of his correspondents; "Are you not sometimes invaded by the darkest visions and reflections, while casting your eye over the scene of human existence from the beginning to this hour? To me it appears a most mysteriously awful economy, overspread by a lurid and dreadful shade. To see a nature, created in purity, qualified for perfect and endless felicity, ruined at the very origin by a disaster devolving fatally on the whole race; to see it at an early age estranged from the love and fear of its Creator — abandoned to all evil till swept away by a deluge — the renovated race spreading downward through ages in darkness, wickedness, and misery — the grand remedial visitation, Christianity, laboring in difficult progress and very limited extent, and soon perverted into darkness and superstition for a thousand years — at the present hour known by very greatly the minority of the race, the mighty mass remaining prostrate under the infernal dominion — the sum of all these melancholy facts being, that thousands of millions have passed, and thousands are every day passing out of the world, in no state of fitness for a pure and happy state elsewhere. O, it is a most confounding and appalling contemplation!"

Such is the accumulation of present evils consequent upon the fall of man. Our author admitted their existence, and mourned over them, and was confounded by them. But did he know how to reconcile them with the righteousness and benevolence of the Supreme Being, who doeth all things after the counsel of his own will? No. He owned his ignorance; he was confounded by the contemplation of the appalling subject — as really so as by the contemplation of everlasting misery. But however dismal the

scene of human degradation and suffering from the fall to the present hour, he uttered not a word of complaint against the divine government; he whispered no suspicion of the divine justice or benevolence. Now whence arose the difference in his treatment of the two subjects? It arose doubtless from this circumstance, that the present consequences of sin were objects of sense, and could not be doubted; while its future consequences, being presented before him only in the way of divine predictions, were open to all the questionings and objections of unbelief, and hence were not admitted as a matter of a cordial, undoubting faith.

But I must proceed to another passage in the letter. The writer, adverting to a principle of human legislation, says; "The man tempted to crime should, as *far as possible* without actual experience, be apprised of the nature and measure of the penal consequence. If it be something totally out of the scope of his faculties to apprehend — it is unknown, and has lost its appropriate fitness to deter him. There is or may be in it what would be of mighty force to deter him, if he could have a competent notion of it. But his necessary ignorance precludes from him that salutary force. Is he not thus taken at a fearful disadvantage?" The author applies this to the present case. He says, — "The threatened penalty," — that is, if it be endless, — "surpasses in imagination every intellect but the Omniscient. Might we not imagine the reflection of one of the condemned delinquents suffering through a million of ages, to be expressed in some such manner as this; O, if it had been possible for me to conceive the most diminutive part of the horror of this doom, every temptation to sin would have been enough to strike me dead with terror; I should have shrunk from it with the most violent recoil."

This argument is aimed against the doctrine of endless punishment. As it is evidently impossible that any finite mind should fully conceive the dreadfulness of everlasting misery, and as the subjects of a just law must, in our author's view, "have a conception of the whole evil involved in the penalty;" his conclusion

is, that a penalty, so inconceivably dreadful as everlasting misery, could not be intended by the divine Lawgiver. The sophistry of this reasoning is quickly seen. It is indeed evident that the whole amount of endless suffering cannot be fully conceived by the human mind. Nor can we fully conceive the whole amount of suffering for millions of years, or for any long period. Indeed no man can fully conceive beforehand what it is to endure the penalties which sin incurs in the present world, as the privations and sufferings of imprisonment, the horrors and agonies of dying on the gallows, or even the pains and distresses of the more violent forms of disease. Hence, on the principle adopted by our author, none of these penal consequences of sin would be just and equitable, and if any one, who has only so imperfect a conception of them, should be doomed to endure them, he would be "taken at a fearful disadvantage." But who would allege this, and thus be guilty of impeaching the justice of all the above named penalties?

The principle adopted by our author implies, that, unless we have a perfect apprehension of the evil involved in the penalty, we are left without suitable motives to avoid transgression, and cannot be justly held accountable for our conduct. But it will be easy to see the fallacy of this principle, if we attend to the following things.

1. This principle would be as really opposed to the limited view of our author respecting future punishment, as to the common view. For, as we have already noticed, no man can have a clear and full conception of future misery continued for millions, or thousands, or hundreds of years; and then, according to the ideas of our author, no one can be justly held accountable for his conduct, inasmuch as suitable motives to obedience are not presented before his mind. In this manner the author contradicts his own scheme, as much as ours.

2. Our having suitable motives to avoid sin and obey the law, does not by any means require that we should have a full conception of the whole evil involved in the penalty for disobedience; nor does it require that we should, "*as far as possible*, be apprised of the nature and measure of the penal consequence." The author

refers to civil government for illustration. But what civil government does all that is *possible* to make the subjects sensible of the dreadfulness of the penalty by which obedience is inculcated, or impresses upon them the motives which should deter them from crime *with the greatest possible clearness and force?* Enlightened legislators and rulers will do all that is *suitable* and *proper* to deter men from crime; but they never do all that is *possible.* Besides publishing the law and its penalty, it would certainly be *possible* to employ qualified officers, who should repeatedly go to every family, and labor assiduously to impress every person, whether old or young, with the meaning of the law, and with the dreadfulness of the punishment it denounces against offenders. But neither the justice nor the benevolence of rulers requires this. They will do all that is fit and proper, but not all that is *possible*, to deter men from committing offences.

And it is very clear, that the Supreme Ruler does not act upon the principle of doing all that is *possible* to impress the minds of men with the evil consequences of sin, and to deter them from it. He does not give them the *clearest possible conception* of the punishment of sin; he does not hold up before them the motives to obedience with the greatest possible power, nor does he exert his omnipotence to the utmost to render those motives effectual. A careful attention to the word and providence of God will show to demonstration, that he does not conduct the affairs of his moral government on this principle. He gave a particular command to Adam, and affixed a penalty; and a dreadful penalty it was. But it does not appear from the sacred records that Adam was as fully informed *as possible*, what would be the consequences of his transgressing the law, either upon himself, or upon his posterity. In the revelations which God made to mankind, under the former dispensation, did he give them the *clearest possible* light respecting the evil consequences of sin, or respecting any of the principles of religion? If so, what need of the clearer light of the gospel? And if the Christian Scriptures have made known the divine law and its penalty, and the doctrine of redemption with *the greatest possible clearness and force*, what need of so much labor on the

part of ministers and other teachers to make them more intelligible and impressive?

What then is our conclusion respecting the principle of the divine conduct in this respect? It is this; that God, in the exercise of his own unsearchable and sovereign wisdom, imparts to mankind, not *the clearest possible*, instruction, but such instruction as he judges to be proper respecting their duty, and respecting the present and future consequences of transgression; the knowledge which he gives them by means of his works, and by the law written on their hearts, and by additional revelations, being in all cases sufficient, unless hindered by their own fault, to guide them in the right way, and sufficient to render them inexcusable, and the sentence of condemnation against them just, when they sin. God in his providence grants different advantages to mankind in different periods of the world, and different advantages to different individuals at the same period; but he grants such advantages to all, as to make it their duty to worship and serve him, and to render them worthy of punishment if they neglect it. And he holds them accountable for what they have, not for what they have not. In this way we justify the ways of God to man. To pretend that a righteous and benevolent God must give to all mankind the clearest *possible* conception of the penal consequences of sin, or the greatest *possible* light on any subject, is plainly contrary to the conduct of his providence and to the teachings of his word, *and is inconsistent with the methods which he has adopted for the trial of his intelligent creatures.*

There is another mistake of our author in the passage quoted. He signifies that, if men had a sufficiently clear conception of the penal consequences of sin, they would avoid it. He represents those who suffer through a million of ages, as having the reflection, that if they could have conceived the smallest part of the horror of such a doom, they would have shrunk back with terror from the commission of sin; whereas it is far more probable that their consciences will reproach them for abusing the privileges which God in mercy granted them, and for neglecting the reasonable service which he required of them. They will see that the cause of their

perishing was not the want of more light, but their sinning against the light which God gave them. It is manifestly implied in our author's remarks, though he was not aware of the implication, that sinners themselves are not so much in fault, as the providence of God.

It is moreover implied, that if they had been favored with a clearer conception of the punishment of sin, they would have been effectually deterred from the commission of it. For a correction of this mistake I refer you to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man requested that more striking and solemn instruction and warning might be sent to his brethren to prevent them from coming to the place of torment where he was, and he was confident that such warning would have the desired effect upon them. But the answer was; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead." Now those who live in Christian lands have not only Moses and the prophets, but Christ and the apostles. They are expressly told, that the soul that sinneth shall die; that indignation and wrath shall be visited upon them who obey not the gospel; that the impenitent and unbelieving shall not see life, but shall go away into everlasting punishment, into the fire that shall not be quenched. Now we may justly say, if men are not persuaded by these instructions and warnings, to turn from the ways of sin, neither would they be persuaded by any additional means, or by any clearer knowledge of the consequences of sin. The fact is, that no external means and no merely intellectual knowledge can ever of itself be effectual to make men obedient and holy, and that the lowest degree of knowledge and external advantages will contribute effectually to the salvation of those, whose hearts are right with God. Truly to avoid sin is not the work of speculative reason however improved, but of a renewed heart. A selfish, ungodly heart is not to be won to obedience by any mental conception, however clear and perfect, of the punishment which is consequent upon a life of impiety. How obvious then is the mistake of our author, in supposing that there is that in the penal consequence of sin which would be of force to

deter men from sin if they could only have a competent notion of it, but that the want of this precludes that force, so that they are "taken at a fearful disadvantage!" It is not the want of a higher degree of speculative knowledge, but the want of a right *disposition*, that destroys the soul. Even the ignorant heathen, if they observe the law written on the heart, will, the Apostle says, be accepted.

Again. Our author shows that, although he had by no means a complete conception of endless misery, he had a solemn and overwhelming idea of the dreadfulness of it. And was not this sufficient to constitute a powerful motive to avoid sin? Did he wish for a more solemn and overwhelming conception of future misery in order to render *him* accountable, and to deter *him* from the commission of sin? And may not others who will seriously consider the subject, have a like conception? And with this clear and alarming conception of the threatened punishment, can they plead that they have not a sufficient motive to obedience, or, if sentenced to endure that punishment, that they are taken at a fearful disadvantage? Does the author think this would be the case with himself?

The writer of the Letter thinks that endless punishment is altogether out of proportion to the demerit of sin committed during this short life. He would doubtless admit that the sinner suffers justly, *so long as he sins*. And certainly he could not see any disproportion between *endless sinning* and *endless punishment*. Now those who hold the doctrine of endless punishment do not suppose, that any one will suffer longer than he continues to sin. But it would be a strange thing in the moral world and totally contrary to the essential laws of the mind, if any one should cease to suffer while he continues to sin against God. In this point of view, the question would be, whether we have reason to expect, that sinners in the world of retribution will repent and become obedient to the divine law. Now this cannot be looked for from the nature of the mind. For we well know that sinning naturally increases the strength of the sinful propensities, and that the habit of sinning is more and more confirmed by sinful practice, and so renders a

return to duty more and more difficult. It is certain that sinners, left to themselves, will never turn from sin to holiness. Can we then infer from the goodness of God, that he will interpose in the world of retribution, and by his Spirit renew sinners to holiness, and thus prepare them to enjoy happiness? It is clear that their continuing so long in their unreasonable enmity and rebellion against God does not entitle them to his favor, does not give them a claim to so great a blessing as the renewing of the Holy Ghost. If he bestows that blessing upon them, it will be all of grace. Has he given us any assurance that he will do this work of grace? Has he made any promise to this effect? Can we then conclude from his infinite benevolence, that he will stop sinners in their wicked course and adorn them with the beauties of holiness at some future period? But why at some future period, rather than the present? If it is in fact consistent with the infinite benevolence of God that man should be left to act wickedly during the present life, why may it not be so hereafter? And if they may sin for a hundred and a thousand years in the world to come, why not longer? And if God in the exercise of his unsearchable wisdom has good reason to leave them in a state of sin through the present life, and for a long period hereafter, may he not have equal reason to leave them in that state perpetually? Whereas a wise and benevolent God has suffered so great an evil as sin to enter into his moral creation, and to continue in it so long, and has made it the unwilling means of securing so much glory to his name and of accomplishing so extensively his benevolent and holy ends, who can predict that he will make so great a change in the mode of his administration as to put an end to sin? Who can be sure that he will not see it to be proper to suffer its existence to continue beyond any limited period, and still to make it the means of honoring his perfections, and of augmenting the welfare of his great moral empire? If you say, his benevolence requires him to exclude sin from his intelligent system; do you not impeach his benevolence for not excluding it long ago, and indeed for suffering it ever to invade his intelligent creation? Or if you do not impeach his *benevolence*, do you not charge him with the want of *omnipotence?*

In regard to the continuance of sin in those who die impenitent, we have no means of forming a just opinion, except the holy Scriptures. And here, if it were the design of a merciful God to turn all the wicked from their wicked ways and to make them heirs of his kingdom at some future time, it would be natural for us to think, that he would inform us of so important and so pleasing an event. But he has given us no such information. We look in vain for any proof that God will bring sinners to repentance and carry on the work of sanctification in the world of perdition, or that there will be any dispensation of grace after the present life, which is the accepted time, the day of salvation. In all the accounts we have of the wicked in the future state, not a single instance of repentance is mentioned, and not a single intimation that any such instance will ever take place. On the contrary, we are clearly taught, that the state of the wicked after death and the judgment day, will be unchangeably fixed; that the mediatorial kingdom of Christ will be given up, his work of saving sinners being closed, and that "everlasting, forever and ever," will be stamped upon their sinful and ruined condition.

Some have intimated that God has concealed his design to give repentance and pardon to sinners hereafter, lest the knowledge of it should encourage them to continue in sin. But how have they found out what God intended should be a secret? And if they have found it out, why should not they conceal it for the same reason that God does, lest the knowledge of it should encourage men to live in sin? Or do they think the times are changed, and that such knowledge as would once have been pernicious, will now tend to good?

I may moreover ask them, how they can reconcile it with the benevolence or the truth of God, that he should not only conceal so comforting a doctrine as that of the final happiness of all, but should fill the minds of men with groundless terror by declaring expressly, that the wicked will be punished forever and ever?

Our author adverts to the idea above suggested, that endless punishment will be evidently just for those who will forever continue to sin. But he does it in a way which betrays the unfor-

tunate habit of his mind. He says, "the allegation of the endless continuance of sin is of no avail in vindication of the doctrine of endless punishment." And why? "Because," he says, "the first consignment to the dreadful state *necessitates a continuance of the criminality.*" But is there any such *necessity* in this case, as interferes with the moral and accountable agency of sinners, or prevents their blame-worthiness? When God in the present life gives men up to hardness of heart and to vile and abominable practices, the ill-desert of their sins remains undiminished, and increases with the increased number and heinousness of their transgressions. And yet they act under the same kind of necessity, as the wicked do in the future world. It is a necessity which consists in the strength of their culpable and hateful dispositions, when God in righteous judgment withholds the influence of his Spirit and leaves them to their own chosen way.

But our author says, "The doom to sin as well as to suffer is inflicted as the punishment of the sin committed in the mortal state. Virtually, therefore, the eternal punishment is the punishment of the sins of time." Be it so. We hold that sin, wherever found, and whether continued for a longer or shorter time, — that *sin itself* is so great an evil, that it does justly, according to God's holy law, deprive the sinner of all good, and plunge him into a state of endless misery; that for the sin committed in time he is righteously doomed to everlasting punishment. I say *sin itself*, in this life *brings the sinner into that wretched state.* He is undone as soon as he sins. His soul is lost. This plainly arises from the very nature of sin and the nature of God's holy law. But this does not imply that the sin committed while under condemnation is less ill-deserving, than the first sin. It does not imply that any of the sins committed in the endless state of sinning, will go unpunished. Although the sin here committed, even one sin, has such hatefulness, malignity and destructiveness, that it does justly bring the sinner into a state of never ending perdition; and although all his sufferings through his immortal existence are related to the sin he committed in time, and even to his first sin, and come as a consequence of it, yet this is not their only

relation. His sufferings in the state of retribution are also related to the sins *there* committed. It cannot be otherwise. For the sins then of this life, the sinner is doomed to a miserable existence hereafter. But that existence is rendered more miserable by continual sinning, which is a continual treasuring up of wrath. The sins of this world really incur endless suffering. But the sins of the next world add to the intensity of that suffering. Just as it is with future happiness. The faithful services of Christians in this life secure to them a gracious admission to the blessedness of heaven. But their growing knowledge of God in the world above, and their growing holiness, and all their acts of obedience, must secure to them increasing measures of enjoyment. Every thought of God, every exercise of gratitude and love, every benevolent and holy action will be in itself delightful to the saints, and will constantly add to the amount of their blessedness. The endless continuance of their happiness is one thing; the degree or measure of it, which will be continually increasing, is another thing. The same is true in regard to the wicked. For sins here committed, they will be doomed to a state of endless punishment. But the duration of their punishment is one thing; the degree of it is another thing. Any number of men may endure suffering through endless ages; while the suffering of each may in degree be different from that of the others. And the endless suffering of each one will, in its measure, correspond to the measure of his ill-desert, or the amount of his criminality. At the final judgment, they will receive from the hand of justice "*according to the deeds done in the body.*" Their wicked deeds here, will be the ground of the irreversible sentence; and according to the measure of their wickedness will be the evil involved in that sentence. The doom to endless punishment will be dreadful to all, but dreadful in degree to each one according to what God shall see to be the degree of his guilt. Such according to Scripture, will be the entrance of the wicked on that perpetual state of misery which will follow the last judgment. And there can be no doubt that the same principle of retribution will be carried into effect through everlasting ages, so that the measure of criminality

will always be, and always be seen and felt to be, the measure of penal infliction.

One thing more. We have seen that our author considers it essential to a righteous retribution, that those who are punished should have been expressly and fully apprized, while in a state of probation, of the penalty of the law which they were required to obey, and should have formed a just and adequate conception of the magnitude of the suffering implied in the penalty. Now does not the author overlook an important principle in moral government? I grant that it is an act of *benevolence* in the Supreme Ruler to give us express information of the punishment which will be incurred by transgression. But it is neither necessary nor possible that we should *fully* apprehend what that punishment will be. And as to *express information* given beforehand in regard to that punishment, it must be remembered that we are intelligent, moral beings, and by the very constitution of our minds, are conscious of good and evil, and of the ill-desert of transgression. And if we had been left as many are, with only our moral nature and the law written on the heart, we should still have been justly doomed to suffer penal infliction according to the measure of our offences. And here we reach the grave conclusion, that the righteousness of the punishment does not depend essentially upon the fact that men have been expressly forewarned of that punishment, but upon *the intrinsic evil of sin.* God says, "The soul that sinneth shall die." This threat teaches what *is* the just punishment of sin. It does not *make* the punishment just, but implies and shows that it *is* just. Did not God see that the punishment is *in itself* just, he would not threaten it. If he did not *expressly* threaten it, he might still justly inflict it. A court of justice pronounces the sentence of death upon a murderer, though that murderer has been brought up in ignorance and has never heard that such would be the punishment. Designedly and maliciously killing a fellow-creature is itself so heinous a crime as to render the death-penalty just, whether the criminal had been expressly fore-warned of that penalty, or not. So any court of justice would regard it. So especially does God regard the transgression of his law. If sin is

committed, if the moral law is transgressed, whatever the circumstances of the transgressor, he incurs the penalty, he destroys his own soul. We may doubt the justice of all this. But God is Judge, and will not be influenced by our doubts, but will do what he knows to be just, and what is just. I repeat it therefore, and regret that our author overlooked it, that the justice of that penal consequence of sin which is set forth in Scripture, results essentially from the intrinsic evil of sin, and not from the circumstance that the sinner had a full conception of that consequence, or was expressly informed of it. That circumstance affects the *measure* of the penal infliction, not its reality or its justice. Thus the word of God teaches us that those who sin in heathen lands will perish, as well as those who sin in Christian lands, but that the latter are more ill-deserving in degree according to their superior advantages.

LECTURE CVIII.

REVIEW OF FOSTER'S LETTER CONTINUED.

I HAVE now gone as far as seems to be necessary in exposing the mistakes which I think chargeable upon our author under the first head proposed, — mistakes in regard to *the use of reason*. He mistakes primarily in imposing upon reason a task which it is by no means competent to perform. And then, while he applies reason to matters which may seem to lie within its province, he commits various mistakes, which reason itself is able to detect.

I now proceed, in the second place, as proposed, to point out the mistakes of our author *as to feeling*. And here pursuing the same general plan as under the former head, I shall endeavor to show, that the author puts *feeling* to do what is out of its province, namely, to determine what shall or shall not be the penalty for transgressing the divine law, or what measure and duration of punishment may be justly inflicted on the wicked in the future world. Any discerning reader of his letter will see that he does, in a considerable degree, make his humane and sympathetic feelings the basis of his judgment in regard to the doctrine of endless punishment. When he thinks of the wicked enduring misery without end, his feelings revolt from it, his benevolent heart sinks under the idea, and says, it is too dreadful, — a God of love cannot inflict it.

Here then I maintain that human *feeling* is no fit standard by which to determine the punishment that shall be executed upon sinners. If human *reason* is not competent to fix the right

measure of penal infliction for the transgression of the divine law, human *feeling* is far less competent. Benevolent and sympathetic feeling is given us for exceedingly important purposes, and when properly regulated and kept within its proper sphere, it has a mighty and indispensable influence in promoting our happiness. Without it man would not be man. He would want one of the chief elements of humanity. But if it sets itself up as a rule of the divine administration, it goes out of its province, — it interferes with the prerogative of the Supreme Being, and produces disorder and mischief in the moral world.

The tender and sympathetic feelings do not constitute a safe and proper rule for the government even of *domestic* society. The feelings of an affectionate father, if consulted, would often prevent him from administering that chastisement which the welfare of his children requires; and he must resist, and sometimes even sacrifice, the tender emotions of his heart, in order to fulfil an imperative parental duty. And it is evident that human feeling is still further from being a safe and proper rule of *civil* government. When aggravated crimes are perpetrated, and the most terrible penalties are incurred, by men who were once the objects of public esteem and confidence, what would become of the majesty of the law, and what of the sacred principle of justice, if the decisions of our Courts should be controlled by the emotions of sympathy and compassion? Law and justice would be prostrated, crimes would be licensed, disorder would prevail, and the bonds of civil society be dissolved.

And if the government of *mere feeling*, instead of law and justice and a regard to the general good, would be so incompatible with the permanent order and happiness of civil society; how much more incompatible would it be with the order and happiness of *God's great moral empire!* The influence of law, the exercise of strict justice, and a wise regard to the general welfare, are important in any society or kingdom, in proportion to its extent and the value of its public and private interests. How indescribably important then is it, that they should prevail and bear sway in the kingdom of God, which comprehends unnumbered worlds, and is

to endure through endless ages! *Mere feeling*, feeling in the heart of man, is very limited in its aims, and generally regards merely the well being of particular individuals, and is utterly incapable of any suitable action in relation to the permanent welfare of the kingdom of God, — which is so vast, that nothing short of his infinite mind can take an adequate view of its extent or its duration. God's infinite mind is perfectly wise and holy, as well as benevolent. God is love; but divine love is united with wisdom and righteousness and power, and these with all other attributes, combined together, constitute the absolute perfection of the Supreme Lawgiver and Ruler, and qualify him to sit on his high and holy throne. But how presumptuous and impious it is for mere *feeling* in the little mind of man to arrogate to itself the right to form a judgment on the measures necessary in the divine administration, much more to place itself in opposition to the penal sanctions which God has expressly affixed to his law, and to the punishment which he has begun to inflict, and which he has plainly told us is to be continued forever! *God himself* sometimes condescends to speak to us after the manner of man, and solemnly declares to us that he has the most kind, compassionate feeling. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; — turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And Jesus wept, in view of the wickedness and approaching ruin of Jerusalem, and said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, — O that thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace!" But God did not govern his conduct by this feeling of good will and compassion towards the persons of the wicked, and by this reluctance, so to speak, to inflict punishment upon them. Notwithstanding the strong emotions of benevolence and pity which arose in his heart towards unrepenting sinners, he withheld not his hand from executing the threatened punishment. He showed himself just and faithful and holy, as well as merciful. He supported the majesty of law and justice; and although he gave perfect assurance that he did not act from anything like hardness of heart and the spirit of revenge among men, he executed upon the wicked who refused to

turn, the full penalty of his law. Jesus, the compassionate Saviour, acted on the same principle. For though he was a man, and had in perfection all the kind and pitiful feelings of man's heart, and did what no other man did to save sinners from perdition, his holy administration was not swayed by his kind and pitiful feelings. He had also, in perfection, the superior principle of inflexible justice, inflexible attachment to law, love of holiness, abhorrence of sin, and a supreme regard to the permanent interests of the universe, and to the glory of the divine attributes. These principles, in connection with his mercy, were set forth in his public instructions, especially when he denounced the judgments of heaven upon those who rejected him, and foretold the everlasting punishment which he himself, the benevolent, compassionate Saviour, as well as the righteous Judge, will inflict upon all who live and die in sin.

Here is a lesson which we ought all to learn, — a principle which we ought to keep in vivid recollection, whenever we turn our attention to the Scripture doctrine of future punishment. For if kind, sympathetic feeling even in the heart of Jesus and in the heart of God, does not, by itself, control the measures of his moral government, surely we can never think *our* feeling competent to do it. And if benevolence and sympathy, existing in consummate perfection in the divine mind, or in the mind of Jesus, do not object to the infliction of the dreadful punishment incurred by sin; the narrow benevolence and imperfect sympathy existing in our mind should be very far from making any objection. And if divine benevolence and pity freely and fully coöperate with justice, wisdom, and holiness, in executing the fearful penalty of the law upon transgressors, shall we be influenced by *our* feeble benevolence and pity, I might rather say by our *weakness*, to object to the execution of that penalty, and to dissent from those high principles of God's moral government? Human benevolence and sympathy, though they should be found in one who possesses the most enlarged understanding in connection with perfect holiness, would be exceedingly out of their proper place, and would assume a business for which they are totally unfit, if

they should attempt in any way to interfere with God's holy government, or do anything in regard to the most mysterious and even the most severe and appalling acts of his administration, but readily to acquiesce, yielding to that sovereign behest, "Be still, and know that I am God." Such is the practical judgment of the best of men in regard to the affairs of the present life. They are fully aware that their natural sensibilities are not given them to guide the events of providence; and as soon as they discover what the will of God is, they at once submit. Thus did Aaron, in view of events which were distressing to his natural affections. Thus did the friends of Paul, who, under the influence of the tenderest affection and sympathy, endeavored to dissuade him from exposing himself to suffering, but soon yielded to a superior wisdom, and said, "The will of the Lord be done." Christians learn more and more perfectly this lesson of self-distrust and pious submission in regard to all the concerns of life. They have less and less confidence in their own judgment, and are less and less inclined to regard their own feelings, even those which are the most kind and sympathetic, as competent to determine what shall be the measures of divine providence, even in respect to the interests of the present world. And in respect to God's future administration in his vast moral kingdom, Christians possessing right habits of thought and feeling, would shrink back at the idea that their own affections and sympathies, however unexceptionable in themselves, are to determine what God's dispensations shall be, or to have any concern with them, except to confide in them and conform to them, as holy, just, and good.

And if the best regulated feelings, the feelings of those who possess the most elevated piety, whose "meditations of God are sweet," and who have attained to habitual peace and joy in believing, — if the feelings even of such are not to be regarded as a rule of the divine conduct in the future world, or as at all competent to determine what punishment the wicked shall endure; *what shall we say of such feelings as unhappily prevailed in the mind of our author?* The account which he gives of himself shows, that either from a disorder in his physical constitution, or

from the want of a more thorough religious experience, or from some other cause, he was the subject of great depression and gloom. It was not merely the future punishment of his fellow-creatures that was to him the subject of melancholy and distressing reflections. The whole economy of God in this world as well as the next, was overspread with darkness and horror. The dismal state of his own mind cast a dismal shade upon the dispensations of divine providence. He dwelt upon such topics as these. "The immensely greater number of the human race hitherto, through all ages and regions, passing a short life under no illuminating, transforming influence of their Creator, — passing off the world in a state unfit for a spiritual, heavenly, and happy kingdom elsewhere!" And then, "how profoundly mysterious is the slow progress" of the gospel "in its uncorrupted purity and saving efficacy!" He cast his view over the scene of human existence from the beginning, and said; "To me it appears a most mysteriously awful economy, overspread by a lurid and dreadful shade. I pray for piety to maintain a humble submission of thought and feeling to the wise and righteous Disposer of all existence. But to see a nature created in purity and qualified for endless felicity, ruined at the very origin, by a disaster devolving fatally on all the race, et cetera," — the sum of all these melancholy facts being, that thousands of millions have passed, and thousands every day are passing out of the world, in no fitness for a pure and happy state elsewhere, — "O, it is a most confounding and appalling contemplation!" It was to him all dark and direful. In the view of the Psalmist, the heavens declared the glory of God, and the earth was full of his riches. The trees and mountains, birds and beasts, and all things around him, were vocal with God's praise. He saw the wickedness of human beings, and rivers of water ran down his eyes, because they kept not God's law; but he had other and higher views; and he could say, "God is my rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are truth and judgment." But how different were the predominant feelings of our author! — When Jesus contemplated the dispensations of God's sovereign mercy and righteousness towards

the different characters of men, he rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." And the apostles and early Christians, in the midst of the sins and miseries of this apostate world and their own trials and sufferings, rejoiced in the Lord with unspeakable joy. And when Paul contemplated the fall of Adam and the degradation and ruin of his posterity, he kept his eye upon that which was more than sufficient to counterbalance all the evil. He beheld a divine glory shining forth from the midst of the darkness — the glory of infinite love towards the redeemed. He saw that, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. With a clear view of this rebellious and miserable world, he could bless God, and could praise his holy name, and could rejoice and glory in a crucified Redeemer. To these elevated, happy views and feelings, our amiable and ingenious author seems to have been almost a stranger. His pathway through life was enveloped in gloom, — a dense gloom, seldom if ever penetrated by the light of heaven. All that was bright and cheering was hidden from his view, and his thoughts were engrossed with what was dark and dismal. I say then, if men whose minds were full of light and peace and joy, never thought of regarding their feelings as a fit rule of the divine dispensations, or a judge of the measure of punishment which should be visited upon the wicked; surely one whose temperament was so unhealthy, and whose mind was subject to so morbid a sensitiveness, should never have suffered *his* feelings to control his faith, or to thrust themselves in as a rule of God's retributive justice towards his incorrigible enemies. If such feelings should be predominant in the minds of Christians, how could they obey the gospel precept, to rejoice and give thanks continually? How could they love God with all their hearts, when his moral excellence and glory were veiled from their view? How could they rejoice that God is on the throne, when they could see nothing there but clouds and darkness, without any rays of heavenly light? How could they take pleasure in the holiness

and happiness of those who are saved, when they could do nothing but pore over the severe and dismal destiny of the lost? Through the influence of an excessive and perverted sympathy and a kind of morbid generosity, they would hardly consent to be saved themselves, unless all others could be saved with them.

The tender sensibilities of our sympathetic author were so excited and agonized by the idea of the endless misery of the wicked, that he wondered how those who believed in it could be happy. He says; "It often surprises me, that the fearful doctrine sits, if I may so express it, so *easy* on the minds of the religious and benevolent believers of it. Surrounded immediately by the multitudes of fellow-mortals . . . . . and regarding them as subjects of so direful a destination, how *can* they have any calm enjoyment of life, how can they be cordially cheerful, how can they escape the incessant haunting of dismal ideas, darkening the economy in which their lot is cast? . . . How can they bear the sight of the living world around them?" The author forgot that the divine economy has a bright side as well as a dark side. And the bright side is *so* bright, that if we look at it intently and devoutly, we shall hardly perceive the darkness. "God is light; and in him is no darkness at all." His law, his whole government, is invested with a resplendent and glorious light, the light of perfect wisdom and holiness and goodness. The created universe is and will be full of blessedness. No pain, no suffering will be there, except the just and necessary punishment of unrelenting criminals, who might have been partakers of the common happiness, but would not, and who will show so vile and hateful a disposition and character, that all good beings will see and acknowledge that their punishment is no more than they deserve, and no more than what the glory of God's perfections and the welfare of his vast kingdom require. Such is a general view of the moral universe. Such is the grand economy of God's government. It is not all dark and dismal, as it appeared to our author. He was mistaken. His vision was diseased. Angels, prophets, apostles, and all Christians whose minds are enlightened and healthy, view the subject very differently. In their view, good

infinitely transcends evil, and even evil is made promotive of good. God's kingdom is full of light, and the little darkness which exists increases the splendor of that light.

Now is it strange and unaccountable, that Christians of enlarged views and rectified feelings, should be cheerful and happy? They do indeed believe what the Scriptures plainly declare as to the future and enduring punishment of the wicked. And they look upon those who are going in the broad way to perdition with inexpressible anxiety and sorrow, and labor and pray for their salvation with earnestness and often with tears. But the doctrine of endless punishment is not the only doctrine which they believe, nor the only one on which they fix their serious contemplations. They believe all the doctrines of the gospel, the glorious gospel of the grace of God. They dwell upon the chief object of Christ's advent, to *save sinners*. They think with admiration of that sovereign love, which actually bestows salvation on some, yea, on a multitude which no man can number, while all deserve to perish. They think of the perfect excellence, the love, the blessings, the holy reign of Christ. They think of the blessedness of being with Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. A thousand objects all around them and above them, things present and things to come, press upon their sanctified and happy contemplations. All God's attributes, all his works and dispensations are invested with mingled majesty and beauty, and diffuse a sacred peacefulness and gladness through their hearts. It is not true that they exult in the dreadful sufferings of their fellow-creatures, as our author seems to suppose that our doctrine implies. Men in a sound moral state do not exult, do not take pleasure in the sins or miseries of immortal beings. They deplore what is evil. They look upon the sufferings of others, especially upon the just punishment which is coming upon the impenitent, with a benevolent anxiety and grief. They have that compassion and sympathy towards them, and that desire for their happiness, which will most effectually incite them to make efforts, sincere and faithful efforts, to turn them from their sinful and destructive courses. I say, they do not take pleasure in

what is evil. It is not the sin or misery of their fellow-creatures that makes them joyful; — far from it. And if there were nothing presented before them but sin and misery, they could have no joy. But shall they overlook all the holiness and blessedness which there is in the eternal and unchangeable God, and in his immense and everlasting kingdom? Shall they not rejoice in what is good? Shall they not take pleasure in the endless happiness of the friends of God? Shall they turn away with dissatisfaction from the holy peace and joy which a benevolent God gives to his obedient servants in all worlds, because there are those, — comparatively few, — who are wedded to sin, and refuse to be happy? Now if those who love God and man, have sorrow of heart for what is evil, and joy in what is good, — sorrow for misery, and joy in happiness; their joy must, in an immeasurable degree, exceed their pain and sorrow, because they find in God, in his law and government, and in his kingdom, a good which infinitely exceeds all existing evil, and because they find too that by the very infliction of merited evil upon the wicked, God manifests his excellence and glory as moral Governor, and gives support to that principle of law and justice, which is essential to the blessedness of intelligent beings. Why should any one suppose that good men, living under the reign of such a God, engaged in performing so reasonable a service, and sharing with a holy universe in a happiness so pure and enduring, — can be otherwise than joyful? Why should they not glory and triumph in the fulness of gospel blessings, which so many happy souls partake with them, and which all others might have, if they would accept them? In a word, the more believers, who are possessed of a well-balanced mind, are affected with the dreadfulness of the just doom which awaits the impenitent, the more earnestly will they labor to deliver sinners from it, and the more profound gratitude and joy will they feel that, as they humbly hope, they are made partakers of the great salvation.

"As to religious teachers," our author says, "If the tremendous doctrine be true, surely it ought to be almost continually proclaimed as with the blast of a trumpet, inculcated and reite-

rated with ardent passion, in every possible form of terrible illustration; no remission of the alarm to thoughtless spirits. What! conceive them in such inconceivably dreadful peril, and not multiply and aggravate the terrors to frighten them out of their stupor; deploring still, that all the horrifying representations in the power of thought or language to make are immeasurably below the real urgency of the subject; and almost wishing that some appalling phenomenon of sight or sound might break in to make the impression which no words can make. . . . . How can it comport with the duty of preachers to satisfy themselves with brief, occasional references to this awful topic, when the most prolonged thundering alarm is but the note of an infant or an insect in proportion to the horrible urgency of the case."

On this passage, which contains much that is true and impressive, I shall make a few brief remarks.

1. How widely does our author differ from those generally, who reject the doctrine of endless punishment! What frequent clamors do we hear from them against those ministers who dwell frequently, though not by any means continually, on these terrifying representations! What complaints are made against such writers as Baxter, Saurin, Alleine, Watts and Pike, for doing even in part what our author thinks they ought to do!

2. His feelings gave him a very distorted view of what might reasonably be expected of those who believe the doctrine of endless punishment. Such was his habit of mind, that when the dreadfulness of everlasting misery seized his attention, it had an uncontrollable power over him. He could think of nothing else. And it seemed to him very strange that this was not the case with all those who admit the truth of the doctrine. Now it is true that ministers of the gospel who make the word of God their standard, will solemnly proclaim the terrors of the Lord as a means of persuading men to repentance. But this is not the only means appointed. This is not the only nor the chief doctrine to be preached. The future punishment of the wicked was not the only subject nor the principal subject of discourse with Christ or the apostles, — although they took care on all proper occasions

to present it before the minds of men in all its terribleness. But they were far from dwelling continually, or "almost continually," on this subject. It was their chief business to set forth the infinite perfections of God, particularly his benignity and mercy; the love, the sufferings and death of Christ, the offices he sustains and the blessings he confers; his invitations and promises; the work of the Holy Spirit in enlightening and sanctifying sinners; the crown of glory laid up for them in heaven, and the various duties incumbent on them as those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; — these and other kindred subjects made up the substance of their instructions. And when such interesting and delightful themes as these occupied the thoughts and swayed the feelings of the sacred teachers, how could they be *continually* proclaiming the future miseries of the wicked as with the blast of a trumpet, without any remission of the thundering alarm? Had they done this, their work would indeed have been a work of terror, an incessant and exclusive proclamation of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, as though Christ came merely to condemn the world, and not that the world through him might have life. And then who would ever have heard of the length and breadth and depth and height of divine love; or of the cross of Christ as a savor of life to believers? Who would ever have been cheered with the joyful truth, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound? Who would ever have been told, that Christ invites sinners, even the chief of sinners to come unto him, and that he is able to save to the uttermost? And who would ever have uttered those glad words, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, — and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also?" Verily we are not left in Egyptian darkness. The sun of righteousness has risen upon us, and our eyes have beheld his glorious light. We have heard the proclamation of an angel, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." And we have heard a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Blessed are our eyes that have seen and our

ears that have heard these things — things which have filled heaven with joy, and which are sufficient to diffuse joy "through all the earth." This world indeed lieth in darkness; but Christians are "light in the Lord." There is misery among unrepenting rebels; but the humble and contrite are not miserable. There is wailing and gnashing of teeth among the incorrigible enemies of God. But wailing and gnashing of teeth is not the portion of the followers of Christ. It is not the great and only work of his ministers to proclaim the divine vengeance and the unquenchable fire. Theirs is a more pleasing office. Their commission is to preach the gospel to every creature, the glorious gospel of the grace of God, and to do it after the pattern of the holy apostles, who did by no means neglect to warn sinners of their danger, and by the terrors of the Lord to persuade them to repentance, but whose principal labor was to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ for the salvation of the lost, and for the edification and joy of the saved. Behold the ministers of Christ to whom God has given "the spirit of love and of a sound mind." How fervent their desires and prayers, how earnest their labors and how severe their sufferings for the conversion of the wicked and for the comfort of the saints! They love their office and are happy in discharging its duties, because they love the Lord Jesus Christ who has called them to it. When through their faithful labors sinners are born again, they look upon them as their joy and crown, and abound in thanks to God for the work of his sovereign grace. The writer of this gloomy epistle was a minister of the gospel. But the office was not congenial to his feelings. He was not comforted by the precious truths which he was called to teach, and he did not love the duties which he was required to discharge. He had indeed good reason to be cheerful and happy in the service of so glorious a Lord and Master. But he was not happy; and his labors, performed under such a dismal depression of spirits, were attended with little success. Now a man habitually subject to such a diseased state of mind, could possess but little of the true spirit of the sacred office, and could form only one-sided and incorrect views of its various duties. Hence he was far

from being qualified to point out the proper course to be pursued by a faithful and devoted servant of Christ.

One word as to the bad consequences of suggesting doubts in regard to the doctrine of endless punishment. The doctrine is in itself such, that men naturally wish it not to be true. They generally give a ready hearing to objections offered against it, while they are slow to admit the force of the arguments urged in its favor. With those who have not a deliberate and confirmed belief of the orthodox doctrine, the doubts and difficulties of such a man as John Foster, will have great weight. His doubts and difficulties will beget doubts and difficulties in them, and will be likely, if they have less reverence for Scripture than he had, to conduct them to conclusions which he would deplore. The bare report or suspicion that Tholuck, or other men of less reputation than he, consider the common doctrine as doubtful, will unsettle the minds of multitudes, and deprive them of the substantial benefit of believing a momentous truth. And few men reject this doctrine, who do not reject others also. It is then a matter of great moment that the public teachers of religion should fortify their minds against the incursion of doubts, that they should take pains to come to a full, unquestioning faith in this doctrine of revelation, and should wisely and faithfully hold it forth in their preaching, and apply it to its proper practical uses.

We must now close the consideration of this subject. The general course of remarks which I have pursued in these two Lectures, may be recounted in few words. Our author very candidly and seriously affirms that the language of Scripture which points out the continuance of future punishment, is "formidably strong, so strong, that it must be an argument of extreme cogency that can authorize a limited interpretation." His argument we have examined under two heads. First, he argues, that endless punishment would be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and would be beyond the ill-desert of sin. I meet this argument by saying, that he undertakes to judge on a subject which lies not within his province; that human reason, in its best state, is exceedingly incompetent to determine what is the demerit of sin, or what

the infallible wisdom of God will see to be its just and proper recompense, or in what manner his infinite benevolence will act itself out relative to this subject, in his vast moral empire. So that whatever our author may think on the subject, whatever may be the conclusions to which his reasoning may conduct him, I maintain that he is essentially unqualified to judge, and that the deductions of his reason, however valid they may appear to him, are entitled to no confidence, because future punishment, in its relation to the perfections of God, to law, and sin, and the well-being of the universe, lies beyond the reach of the human faculties, and any man, who takes upon him by reasoning to determine what will be or will not be the duration of future punishment, will be sure to err. He has no adequate understanding of the principles on which the decision of the question must rest, and no ability to apply those principles so as to arrive at a right result. The author's argument then for giving a limited interpretation to the language of Scripture referred to, is built upon the sand. It cannot be relied upon. Instead of being an argument of extreme cogency, it has no cogency at all. The formidable strength of the language of holy writ remains then unbroken. And after all that is advanced in this ingenious and eloquent epistle, we stand up boldly and say, that sin is so great an evil as to deserve the penalty of the law, involving everlasting punishment; and that such punishment is not only reconcilable with the unbounded goodness of God, but is required by it. And we say this, not because we can make it out by mere reason, but because the language of Scripture teaches it, and no "argument of extreme cogency," or of any cogency, exists for giving that language a limited interpretation. Such is the first general mistake in which our author was involved. He entrusted reason with a subject which it is not able to grasp. And we have seen into what manifest oversights and mistakes he was betrayed by his unfortunate habit of thinking — mistakes which reason itself, under proper direction, might have avoided.

Under the second head, we have found that our author errs still more in the matter of *feeling*, than in the matter of *reason*. For

if the noble faculty of *reason*, in its most improved state, is not competent to judge on so vast and profound a subject, as the just punishment of sin, human *feeling* is far less competent; and, if it is made our standard in judging of the divine conduct in this concern, it will lead us into many and hurtful errors. *Feeling* in the most enlightened, sound, and well-balanced minds is unfit to be our guide on such a subject. It is designed and adapted by our Creator for very important purposes, but here it is out of place. And if *feeling* in the strongest, soundest minds cannot be relied upon as a safe guide in judging of the future punishment of the wicked; how unsafe and perilous is it to be guided by such feeling as that of our illustrious but unhappy author, — feeling so soft, so sensitive, and timid — so incapable of surveying with composure the scene of human suffering even in this world, and still more incapable of thinking with quiet acquiescence of the sentence which the Saviour himself, the Lamb of God, will pronounce upon the wicked at the last day. It was a fundamental mistake for him to suffer *feeling* to gain such power over him in regard to such a subject; and from this mistake, and the same mistake in regard to reason, the various false conclusions which we have noticed, naturally and necessarily resulted.

Finally. Take care to guard against the obvious and essential mistakes of our author; come to the holy oracles without having your mind prepossessed with the abovementioned errors of reason and feeling, and humbly, and honestly, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, attend to the formidably plain and strong language of the infallible word of God, and you will find no place for doubts and objections, but will seriously and tremblingly believe the fearful doctrine of endless punishment.

LECTURE CIX.

CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES. BAPTISM.

The word *sacraments* is commonly used to denote the *ordinances* or *rites* of the Christian church. *Sacrament* originally signified the oath, by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves to obey their commander. When applied to the ordinances of the gospel, it is, I suppose, intended to signify, that those who make use of them promise obedience to Christ. In the Vulgate version of the New Testament, the word *sacramentum* was employed to translate *μυστήριον*, *mystery*. Thus the word *mystery* acquired a new sense in the writings of the early Christians. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were called Christian *mysteries*, partly because under external symbols spiritual blessings were veiled, and partly, perhaps, on account of the secret manner in which they were attended. But I much prefer to call Baptism and the Lord's Supper Christian *ordinances*, or the *positive institutions* or *rites* of the Christian religion. By using these words, we may easily settle the strange controversy which has existed about the number of the sacraments. For the simple question would be, whether this thing or that is divinely appointed to be a standing ordinance in the Christian church.

In a religious ordinance or sacrament, two things are included, *the sign*, and *the thing signified*. The sign is outward and sensible. The thing signified is something inward and spiritual, which is represented by the sign, and in our thoughts associated with it. Hence, by a common figure of speech, the name of the sign is

sometimes given to the thing signified. So Christ is called "our Passover," he having been represented by the Passover. In like manner, as the bread used in the Lord's Supper represents or signifies his body, and the wine his blood, the *bread* is *called* his *body*, and the *wine* his *blood*. The signification however goes further, and refers to the death of Christ, by which atonement was made, and spiritual blessings procured for his people. By the same figure of speech, the Scripture says of the rock in the wilderness from which water issued for the supply of the Israelites, — "that rock *was Christ*," it being a striking representation of him; and it was said of the two olive trees seen by the Prophet Zechariah, — "the two olive trees *are the two anointed ones*," — that is, Zerubbabel and Joshua, who were fitly represented by the olive trees. Some of the early Christian fathers called baptism *regeneration*, doubtless because baptism was an indication of regeneration, or spiritual cleansing. And the same figure seems to have been used in some passages of Scripture; for example; Ananias said to Paul, "arise, and be baptized, *and wash away thy sins*," baptism being a sign of such washing. The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration (so called) and the doctrine of Transubstantiation, rest, so far as I can see, on no better ground than this, that a well known figure of speech, which is frequently used in Scripture and is of very easy interpretation, is most absurdly understood to convey a sense exactly literal.

The benefit of positive institutions or outward rites in religion is exceedingly obvious. It is a striking remark of Chrysostom, that *if we were incorporeal beings, God would have delivered his gifts to us naked and incorporeal; but as our soul is connected with a body, he has delivered things intellectual by sensible signs.*

God has generally taken things already familiarly known, and appointed them to be signs or representations of the blessings of his goodness. Thus the rainbow, which had always been seen as a natural phenomenon, was made a sign or pledge that the world should not be again destroyed by a universal deluge. It was God's *covenant*, that is, his promise, or declared purpose, that the world should not be thus destroyed, and the rainbow was appointed

to be a sign to remind us, that such is his covenant, or promise. It is God's purpose and promise to cleanse sinners from moral defilement, and to renew them to holiness. In Heb. 8: 8—12, this divine purpose and dispensation is represented as a "new covenant," in distinction from the former dispensation, which consisted so much in outward rites and was far less efficacious. It was the revealed purpose of God to bestow more precious blessings, or rather, to bestow spiritual blessings in larger measures. "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their iniquities will I remember no more." Now this *covenant*, this gracious design and promise of God to sanctify and pardon sinners, is represented by sensible signs, that is, baptism and the Lord's Supper. By these we are assisted to keep in mind the blessings flowing from the atonement of Christ and from the operation of the Holy Spirit. Our faith in the great mercy of our Saviour and Sanctifier is confirmed, and the blessings of salvation are sealed to us, if we comply with the requirements of the gospel. In other words, believers are in this way assured that those blessings shall be theirs. The seals, as applied to individuals, are evidently *conditional*, like the general promise of forgiveness and salvation. God promises to pardon and save. The promise is written in the Scriptures and proclaimed by the servants of Christ; and we read it, and hear it. The blessings promised are precious; but they are limited to those who believe. The import of the seals, when applied to individuals, is limited in the same way. Otherwise their import would be untrue. If they gave assurance of forgiveness and eternal life to any, except believers, they would contradict the promises of the gospel. For those promises give assurance of salvation only to believers. The same is true of the outward seals. Baptism and the Lord's Supper no more secure salvation to all who receive them, than the promises secure it to all who read or hear them. The value of the gracious promises of the gospel lies in this, that they give us assurance of forgiveness, on condition of our repentance and faith. Baptism

and the Lord's Supper seal the promises. As *signs* appointed by God, they give assurance to believers, that the promised blessings of salvation will be theirs. They do not, by any virtue inherent in them, or imparted to them, *confer* spiritual blessings upon individuals, any more than the rainbow did, of itself, confer the blessings of seed-time and harvest. The rainbow was a sign, a mere sign, that those blessings should be enjoyed by the world at large. As the promise of those blessings was without any condition, the sign gave assurance of them without any condition.

The Apostle says, that circumcision was to Abraham "a seal of the righteousness of faith," that is, of gratuitous justification, which he before had. It was a sign or token, that the blessings of free justification did in reality belong to him, *as a believer*. When applied to others, whoever they might be, whether old or young, and whether Israelites or gentiles, it was a seal of the promise — of what promise? Why, of the promise of the same free justification to them, if they had the same faith as Abraham had. It did not, of itself, by any virtue inherent in it or imparted to it, actually *confer* spiritual blessings. Nor was it a seal or confirmation of any promise, that God would confer them unconditionally upon all who should be circumcised; for there was no such promise. When applied to Abraham's natural seed, it did indeed seal to them important privileges; but it did not seal spiritual blessings to them, except on the condition of their walking in the steps of faithful Abraham. If they complied with that condition, he would be a God to them, as he was to him. If then you would determine the meaning and the value of the sign, first determine the meaning and the value of the promise, or covenant, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed." This promise contained an infinite good. But for whom? Not for all the descendants of Abraham indiscriminately and absolutely, but for those who possessed his faith. Here then you see the meaning and value of the seal. It confirmed the blessings of the covenant to those who were circumcised, on condition of their having faith. Their having faith would constitute them, in the high, spiritual sense, children of Abraham, and the seal would then assure them,

that the blessing of Abraham would be theirs. The promise uttered a precious truth. The seal confirmed the same truth ; — just as a seal put upon a man's last Will and Testament, confirms what the Will contains. If the Will grants favors absolutely, the seal confirms them absolutely ; if conditionally, the seal confirms them conditionally.

The same is true of the external rites, or sacraments, under the gospel dispensation. They are seals or visible confirmations of the covenant of grace. Now this covenant or declared purpose of God sometimes gives a general assurance of the bestowment of spiritual blessings upon sinners, an assurance that God will carry on the work of redemption, and will call sinners with a holy calling. And in reference to this, the sacraments or visible rites of our religion may be understood as giving assurance to the church, that he will save sinners, and will continue to preserve and build up his kingdom on earth, and that he will do it by the means which he has appointed, such as the preaching of the gospel, reading the Scriptures, the instructions, the examples and prayers of pious parents and other Christians, and the dispensations of providence. But the covenant or gospel promise, taken in its personal application, or its application to individuals, secures forgiveness and eternal life to those only who repent and believe. Whatever privileges men enjoy, whatever their external relations may be, or their visible characters, the promise of God does not insure their salvation unless they have true faith, the faith of God's elect. Of course, neither the rite of baptism, nor the rite of the sacred supper, seals or confirms the blessings of forgiveness and salvation to any individuals, except on condition of their having true faith. If you ask, whether it does not always secure to them regeneration and faith ; the answer is, that neither the word nor the providence of God evinces that it does so. The promises of God are the same, and the declarations that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and that those who are given to Christ shall come to him, are the same as they would be, if there were no sacraments. The appointed sacraments or outward rites do not change the doctrines or promises of God's word, but seal and confirm them —

confirm them *as they are*. They do not give assurance of eternal life, except in accordance with the teachings of revelation. Those who receive baptism cannot be saved on any lower terms, than those who do not receive it. The inspired declarations, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven;"—"He that believeth on the Son hath life; but he that believeth not shall not see life,"—These declarations are as true, as if there were no sacraments, and as true to those who receive the sacraments, as to those who do not. I repeat it, that the outward institutions or rites of Christianity are not intended to make any alteration in the truths or promises of the gospel, or in the terms of salvation, but on the contrary, are intended to confirm them as they are, to show that they are immutable.

Although the outward rite of baptism is designed to indicate that inward purification which is necessary to eternal life, and to show that the blessings of the gospel truly belong to all who receive it in the spirit of faith; it is, in fact, still applied to many, who are not partakers of those blessings. Through the want of godliness in those who are baptized, there is a separation between the sign and the thing signified. Baptism is administered, as it was to Simon the sorcerer, and administered lawfully, so far as the administrator is concerned, while the inward grace is wanting. On the other hand, the inward grace, that is, spiritual purification, unquestionably belongs to many who are not baptized. Indeed all adult persons should give evidence of the beginning of inward purification, previously to baptism. Thus the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith teaches, that "grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to baptism, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all who are baptized, are undoubtedly regenerated." The Apostle says; "neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." It is equally true, that neither baptism, by itself, nor the want of it, availeth anything. The grand prerequisite to salvation is faith in Christ. But it is clear, that all who have faith, will be sincerely disposed to obey the divine commands and conform to the divine institutions. Hence, in all ordinary circumstances, believers will

be baptized, so that in them the outward sign and the spiritual blessing signified will, according to the manifest design of the rite, be joined together. But it is a most palpable mistake to suppose that all who are baptized are therefore the subjects of spiritual purification. For it is evident from Scripture and from facts, that baptism has no more efficacy to regenerate and save the soul, than circumcision had. There is no more reason to conclude, that all who are baptized are renewed by the Spirit, than that all who were circumcised were thus renewed. We know that circumcision was as really a sign of spiritual blessings, as baptism is. It was, the Apostle says, a sign or "seal of the righteousness of faith." But the sign or seal avails nothing, if the good signified is wanting. It is as useless as a seal upon a blank paper. There can be no more erroneous or fatal opinion, than that which has prevailed so universally in the Catholic church, and so extensively in Protestant churches, namely, that baptism, either by its own inherent virtue, or through the divine blessing accompanying it, certainly insures and even implies the actual regeneration of all who are baptized. Baptism does indeed bring those who receive it into an important relation to the church of Christ and secures to them important privileges, which God often blesses to their salvation. But to regard the outward rite, and to rely upon it, as insuring inward purification by the Holy Spirit, is an error of most fearful tendency, and it has contributed to the fatal delusion of multitudes which no man can number.

Every ordinance of God is important, and ought to be conscientiously and solemnly observed. But how small comparatively was the value which Christ and the apostles attached to external rites. The Apostle Paul says, he was not sent to baptize, but to preach the gospel, and he speaks of it with satisfaction, that he had baptized only a few individuals. It was the preaching of Christ crucified, not baptism, that he regarded as the power of God to salvation. This was the great work which was assigned to him as the Apostle to the Gentiles. The administration of the rite of baptism, being of minor consequence, was committed to others, while he, the chief Apostle, accomplished a higher object, making known the truths

of the gospel, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Had he looked upon baptism as that which would secure the saving influence of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sin, he most surely would not have treated the subject as he did.

Baptism, which in its application to adult believers, signifies their spiritual cleansing and their ingrafting into Christ, and seals to them the promised blessings of grace, may also be regarded as a means of their spiritual improvement, by showing them more clearly the importance of those things which are signified by it. And it may, if God pleases, be a means of salvation to persons who improperly offer themselves for baptism while unregenerate. It may impress their hearts with the necessity of that inward purification which is signified by the rite, and either at the time of its administration, or afterwards, it may, through divine grace, be the means of their conversion. It may often be the means of saving benefits to infant children, who are offered for baptism by their believing parents. At the very time of their baptism they may, if it please God, be renewed by the Spirit; or the renewing of the Spirit may be granted afterwards, but granted still in a real connection with the ordinance of baptism. So the Confession of Faith represents the matter. "The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered". . . . . "By the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really conferred by the Holy Ghost to such, (whether of age or infants,) *as that grace belongeth unto according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.*" There are those, to whom, according to the counsel of God's own will, the grace of the Holy Spirit belongeth; that is; God in his sovereign mercy has designed it for them, has chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit. And "such" — not all who are baptized, but "such as that grace belongeth unto," will, "in God's appointed time," experience that purifying influence of the Spirit, of which baptism is the sign. The saving efficacy of baptism depends ultimately on the counsel of God's own will, and is, in his appointed time, applied to the heirs of salvation. By this view of the subject we are freed from the strange and perplexing supposition of a saving efficacy

inherent in the outward ordinance, or uniformly imparted to it,— a supposition as contrary to Scripture and to well known facts, as it would be to suppose that the ordinance of the Lord's supper secures forgiveness and eternal life to all who partake of it, or that the preaching of the gospel has an efficacy to convert all who hear it.

But for a full explanation and defence of the general doctrine of baptism, and a satisfactory exposure of false views of the subject, I must refer you to Calvin's Institutes, to Dwight's and Dick's Theology, and to other well known works, both didactic and controversial, relating to baptism; and shall proceed to that which I shall make a more particular subject of discussion, namely, Infant Baptism.

LECTURE CX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

THE doctrine of *Infant Baptism* has been the subject of long-continued controversy in the Christian world, and has given rise to more contention among the followers of Christ, than almost any other subject. It has been the occasion of separating into different communions, those who have been united in their belief on all other subjects, and who have been animated by the same spirit of love to Christ and his cause. I trust the time has arrived, when those who differ in opinion respecting Infant Baptism, will cherish feelings of candor and forbearance towards one another.

As those for whom these Lectures are specially intended, will be called to act a part not only in private but in public, in regard to the subject now to be considered; I shall suggest a few precautions and directions, for the purpose of rendering your influence more extensively useful to the cause of truth, and the cause of love.

1. *Take care not to magnify the subject beyond its real importance.*

The subject ought not indeed to be underrated, or treated as a trifle. It is no trifle. It obviously possesses a high degree of importance, and deserves to be maintained with firmness and zeal. But after all, we must remember that it is an *outward rite*, and does not belong to the essence of the Christian religion. If men are born of the Spirit; if they love and obey the Saviour, and are prepared for the kingdom of heaven; the great object for

which Christ died, and for which we ought to labor, is obtained. It is clear, then, that the subject of baptism cannot be regarded as bearing any comparison, in point of importance, with the conversion and salvation of sinners. And whatever discussion we may think it our duty to undertake, and with whatever earnestness we may labor to bring men to receive what we sincerely believe to be a divine institution; we ought still to consider their eternal salvation as infinitely more important, than merely conforming to an outward rite. And if they show by their conduct, that they are friends to Christ and truly obedient to his gospel, we should cordially thank God, and rejoice, though they may conscientiously differ from us in regard to external observances.

2. *While those who reject the rite of Infant Baptism, give evidence of a Christian character, they are entitled to our affection and confidence.*

In the exercise of Christian candor, we can easily be satisfied that men who truly desire to please God, may differ from us in regard to this religious rite. The proof that Infant Baptism is a divine institution, though very clear and satisfactory to us, may not be so to those who have been placed in a different condition from us, and have formed different habits of thinking. The circumstances of their birth and education may have led them, as a matter of course, to entertain different views on this subject; and those views may have been associated with the earliest and deepest impressions of divine truth on their minds, and with their most spiritual exercises. Had we been placed in their circumstances, should we not probably have adopted the same views?

Those who come to the examination of this subject may have such ideas of the *kind* or *degree of evidence* which is necessary to support a positive institution, that, with those mistaken ideas, their honest desire to do the will of God, may prevent them from agreeing with us as to the rite of Infant Baptism.

Let us duly regard such considerations as these; and, instead of stigmatizing those Christians who differ from us, let us cherish towards them the sincerest candor and kindness. It is no difficult thing to account for their peculiar views from their peculiar circumstances,

without any impeachment of their motives or any distrust of their piety. Why then should we not entertain the same sentiments of love and confidence towards them, and the same desire for their improvement and happiness, as though they belonged to the same denomination with ourselves?

3. *Never introduce this subject in the way of controversy, except when a pure regard to the interests of Christ's kingdom requires it.*

Undoubtedly a regard to the high and sacred interests of religion will lead you, at proper times, to exhibit and defend what you honestly believe to be true on this subject, and to do it with seriousness and zeal. But when this is to be done, it will be expedient, generally, that you enter upon it with particular preparation, and pursue it in a regular discourse, instead of remarking upon it in a hasty or cursory manner. The practice of introducing such a subject, from day to day, and on all occasions, betrays improper feeling in us, and is likely to promote the same in others. Let this subject therefore be brought forward only on occasions when there is an obvious and special reason for doing it; and then let it be presented in connection with the weighty truths of religion, and treated with great moderation and seriousness. Thus you will show that it is a matter of conscience, not of party feeling.

4. *Treat those who differ from you in regard to Infant Baptism with uniform kindness.*

Study to do them good. Exercise towards them a *generous friendship*, and exhibit that friendship in substantial acts. In this way you may hope to produce candor and kindness in them, and to prepare them to join their efforts with yours in promoting those common interests of Christ's kingdom, which are immeasurably more important, than the *peculiar* interests either of their denomination or of yours. And should you find that the object of your wishes is not at once obtained, and that any of those, whom you labor to conciliate, and whose welfare you aim to promote, choose after all to stand aloof, and to exhibit the spirit of sectarian zeal and animosity; — and should they sometimes go further, and speak of those arguments, which you consider to be strong and decisive, as flimsy and contemptible, and attempt to

lower your reputation and to hinder your success; still persevere in the exercise of forbearance and kindness towards them, and even of magnanimity, remembering that, whatever you may suffer for the present, such conduct will have a happy effect upon your own mind, will promote the best interests of Christ's Church, and secure the gracious approbation of your Father in heaven, remembering too, that the opposite course, that is, the exercise of unkindness and severity towards those Christians who differ from you, would injure your own spiritual interests, as well as theirs, and would tend to perpetuate all the evils of division and strife.

Having made these suggestions in regard to the spirit of mind with which the subject of Infant Baptism should be discussed, and the manner in which we should conduct ourselves towards those who differ from us, I shall call your attention to considerations relating more directly to the subject itself.

As a preparation for a profitable discussion, it is of special consequence that you should free your minds from all mistaken apprehensions, as to the *kind and degree of evidence* which is to be considered necessary. I introduce this subject here, because it relates to the mode of reasoning which is to be pursued, and because it is obviously best, as far as may be, to settle our minds on this point at the outset.

Different conceptions respecting the proper mode of reasoning are evidently the principal causes of the difference which exists among men in regard to the question at issue. If in regard to any position, we look for evidence of which the subject is not capable, or which is not accessible to us at the present time; the most diligent and persevering inquiry must leave us unconvinced. The proposition laid down may be true; but we may not be satisfied of its truth. It may have sufficient evidence; but our mode of estimating evidence may be such as to prevent conviction. Suppose a man is accused before a court of justice of a particular crime; and suppose there is clear *circumstantial* evidence, and that only, of his guilt. If the court demand *direct, positive* proof of the crime, the evidence which they have will go for nothing, and the man, though manifestly guilty, will be pronounced innocent. But

such is not the principle which governs our courts of justice, even in those proceedings which relate to life and death. They look for positive evidence, if it can be had. If not, they admit satisfactory evidence of another kind.

The importance of just views respecting evidence is obvious in respect to moral subjects generally. Even when the evidence sought is of the right kind; we must still take care not to mistake as to the *degree* of it which is necessary. In regard to any moral truth, it belongs not to us to determine by what evidence it shall be supported. On this point, our expectations, in many instances, may be greatly disappointed; and we may be obliged either to reject some of the most important principles of natural and revealed religion, or to be satisfied with evidence very different from what we once supposed necessary and attainable. Our object then should be to discover the evidence, whatever may be its kind or degree, which is within our reach, and which shall be sufficient to satisfy a reasonable and candid man.

We are to remember also, that much depends on our prevailing *disposition*. Many a doctrine is of such a nature, that if our moral state is right, a small degree of evidence will be sufficient to produce entire conviction of its truth. There is something in the original constitution or in the acquired habit of the mind, or in other truths already admitted, which predisposes us to receive it. This constitution or habit of the mind, and the admission of other truths allied to the one under consideration, may have the *effect of evidence;* and if it could be clearly perceived and defined, it might appear to have the *nature* of evidence. It may in fact be evidence of the best kind, — most suited to the nature of the subject, and most likely to produce a steady and permanent influence. Sometimes this state of the mind, and the evidence of other related truths, may be the only proof we can now have of a very important truth. And yet this truth may be as clearly apprehended and as firmly believed, and may exert as useful an influence on the mind, as though it were proved in any other way whatever. It will be very easy for those, who have been accustomed to think profoundly on moral subjects, to recall many instances of this.

The foregoing remarks account for a fact of frequent occurrence; namely; that a man unhesitatingly believes a particular truth, and yet finds it very difficult to exhibit definitely the *reasons* of his belief. The evidence in such a case may be so concealed in its nature, or so gradual and insensible in its influence, that it will be difficult, even for a nice observer of the operations of his own mind, clearly to describe it; and quite impossible, for those who have but little cultivation. So that it cannot by any means be considered as a conclusive argument against the soundness of a man's faith, that he is at present unable distinctly to assign the reasons of it. The manner in which he was brought to believe the truth may have been perfectly conformed to right reason, and perfectly satisfactory; and yet he may not have the skill requisite to trace it out, and describe it. To be prepared for this, he must have some acquaintance with the laws of the mind, and with the manner of developing its principles and operations in proper language. But for acquiring this, his situation may afford him no adequate advantages. And yet that same situation does not necessarily deprive him of the good effects of a rational and well established faith.

If you apply the remarks which have been made to the subject under consideration, you will soon be satisfied, that *the want of an express, positive command of Scripture*, that is, *a command in so many words, that infants should be baptized, is not to be considered as a valid objection against Infant Baptism.* As this position is of special importance, I shall take some pains to illustrate its truth.

Admitting, as we must, that all positive religious rites are *originally* founded on a divine command; we cannot safely conclude that such a command will be repeated to all those who shall afterwards be under obligation to observe such rites, or even that the original command will be preserved and communicated to them in the sacred writings. Neither of these can be considered as indispensable; because sufficient evidence of a divine institution may be afforded in some other way. It may be afforded, particularly, by oral instruction. It is unquestionable, that the knowledge of some extraordinary events of providence, or of some

divine injunctions may be as truly and as certainly communicated in this way, as in others ; and we should, in many cases, consider a man who should refuse to admit the truth and authority of such a communication to be as unreasonable, as if he should refuse to admit the truth and authority of written or printed records.

If we should insist upon the express repetition of a divine command at different times, or upon a written record of it, as indispensable ; we should overlook one of the methods which God has manifestly adopted in regard to the positive institutions of religion. For example ; what clear and certain proof have we, that the divine command, enjoining the observance of the Sabbath, or the offering of sacrifices, was expressly repeated to the successive generations of men from Adam to Moses ; or that they derived either of those divine institutions from historical records ? And what direct, certain proof is there of the repetition of the divine command, or the existence of any historical records, during the period from Abraham to Moses, respecting the rite of circumcision ? And to come down to later times ; what express command has God given to us, or to any Christians since the days of the apostles, requiring the first day of the week to be observed as a Sabbath ? And what express declaration have we in the sacred records, that such a command was ever given either by Christ or his apostles ? In regard to this, we who observe the Christian Sabbath must either say, that a positive divine command has been given directly to us ; or that a command, originally given by Christ, has been preserved to us in the Scriptures, — neither of which are we able to say ; — or we must justify ourselves in observing the Lord's day, because some other considerations show that such is the will of God. On what ground then shall we proceed in regard to this subject ? We have no express command from God particularly to us, and no record of any former command, authorizing us to regard the Lord's day as a divine institution. Are we then to fall in with the prevailing practice in regard to a religious rite, merely because we judge it becoming and useful ? By no means. We must then rest the Christian Sabbath on the ground of the original institution of the Sabbath, as enjoined in

the Decalogue. And we must at the same time admit, that the original institution was particularly modified at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, although such a modification is no where expressly required in the Scriptures. It must be evident therefore, that if we should insist upon the necessity of an express divine precept, either originally addressed to us, or transmitted to us by the sacred records, in order to justify us in observing the rite of *Infant Baptism;* we should contradict our own practice in regard to another important subject very analogous to this.

And what shall we say in regard to *female communion?* The Lord's Supper is allowed to be a divine institution. But it was enjoined originally upon the *apostles*. Christ did not give the command to females; and there is no express mention in the New Testament of their having ever received the Lord's Supper. We all believe it to be the will of God that they should partake. But how do we prove this? Not by any express *command of Christ*. Not by any *definite account* in the Scriptures that they did actually partake. The argument on which we rest is derived from the reasonableness of the thing; from the uniform practice of the early Christian churches, as set forth in Ecclesiastical History; and from what appears to be *implied* in the Scripture account. That is, we believe God has made known his will, that pious women should partake of the Lord's Supper, without the least appearance of any express command requiring it, and without any mention in the Scriptures of their ever having partaken in the first Christian churches. The single question is, by what evidence we are satisfied that they ought to partake? And if we are satisfied in this case, without any express command; why should we not be in the other case?

Thus we plead, that Infant Baptism rests on the same kind of evidence with the observance of the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath, with female communion, and with the offering of sacrifices in the patriarchal age from Adam to Moses; that is, it is sustained by good usage, by the uniform practice of the church, founded originally on the revealed will of Christ and attested to us by credible history. To ascertain what the apostles taught and what they

did, we must look not simply to those inspired writings of theirs which are transmitted to us, but to the constitution and practice of the churches which they established.

My object in this place is to remove a mistake as to the kind and degree of evidence which should be deemed conclusive, and to show that demanding an express precept in favor of Infant Baptism, that is, demanding a new and explicit command, a command in so many words, enjoining Infant Baptism, would be unreasonable and inconsistent. I wish every man to settle it in his mind perfectly and forever, that, in a multitude of cases, other evidence ought to be received and is received as satisfactory.

Let it be remembered, that we did not originate the human mind, nor the doctrines and institutions of religion, nor the evidence which obliges us to believe those doctrines, and observe those institutions. The faculties of the mind, the doctrines and institutions of religion, and the evidence which supports them, are all of God. The manner in which he has made known his will, and the kind and degree of evidence which he has afforded in favor of the truths and duties of religion, are unquestionably conformed to our intellectual and moral constitution; and they are specially suited to excite us to diligent efforts; to give due exercise to candor and humility; to make us feel the necessity of being guided by the divine Spirit; and finally, to produce such a conviction in us, as will best subserve the purposes of moral discipline. It is not God's way to give us evidence of the highest kind and degree possible. As to many moral and religious truths, the evidence which supports them is far from being so clear and certain as we might desire. It comes indirectly. It comes in the way of inference from other truths more plain and obvious. It sometimes consists in a kind of instinctive moral discernment, a spontaneous operation of our faculties, which cannot be easily described. Sometimes it is the slow result of experience and observation. And if a precept or institution is concerned, depending ultimately for its authority on a divine revelation; that revelation is oftentimes communicated to us through the channel of history or oral instruction. It is manifestly our duty, as intelli-

gent beings, to hold ourselves ready to receive just such evidence as God is pleased to afford. And if any of us should undertake to prescribe to him, or to determine beforehand what evidence we must have to satisfy our faith; and if we should reject everything, which is not attended with just such evidence as we might desire; we should give up some if not all of the most important moral truths, and should fall into a state of skepticism, most fearful in its influence on our present and our eternal interests.

LECTURE CXI.

INFANT BAPTISM.

In the last Lecture, I endeavored to show, that *there being no express declaration of Scripture, no command in so many words, in favor of Infant Baptism, is not a valid argument against it.*

I now proceed to say, that there is a special consideration in relation to this particular rite, which will give additional force to the remarks I have made, and will show still more clearly that no one can properly demand a direct, express precept of Scripture for baptizing children, and that other evidence should be received as satisfactory. The consideration is, that *a religious rite of long standing, and intended for the same general purposes with baptism, had, by express appointment of God, been uniformly applied to infant children.* The existence of such a rite, and the high importance which was universally attached to it by the people of God, would make it easy to substitute in its place a rite of the same general import, though different in form. This last rite, indicating generally the same thing with the former, would require less formality of divine injunction — less appearance of interposition on the part of God to introduce it, than would be necessary to introduce an institution whose design and application were entirely new. Those Christians, who had been familiar with the previous rite of infant circumcision, that is, the previous mode of consecrating children to God, must have been predisposed in favor of Infant Baptism, and must have been ready, at any intimation of Christ

or his apostles, at once to receive it. They must have been ready to fall in with it, as a matter of course. The public consecration of children to God by a religious rite had for many ages been a standing practice in the church. It came not from Moses, but from Abraham, the father of those who believe in all nations. Now what is the consecration of children to God by *baptism*, but a previous appointment of God, that is, the appointment of infant circumcision, so modified as to agree with the Christian dispensation? In such a case, especially if the original institution was held in high estimation, and attended with high endearments; what more could be deemed necessary, than that the will of God should be made known, as to the *new form* of the rite? After such an expression of the divine will, that is, the appointment of baptism, we should think that the dedication of children to God under the new form of the rite, would immediately go into practice. It is quite manifest, that in the case now under consideration, there was less occasion for an express command from God to give sanction to the new rite, that is, to the *new form* of consecration, than if no rite of similar import had existed before; I might rather say, no occasion at all.

In several respects you will perceive a striking analogy between the institution of Infant Baptism and that of the Christian Sabbath. The institution of the seventh day as a sabbath had been established from the creation of the world. Under the reign of Christ, the original institution was to undergo a certain modification. But how was this modification effected? How was the Christian church brought to give up the seventh day, and to observe the first, as a Sabbath? Was an express divine command formally announced in regard to the Lord's day? Did God expressly bless the first day and sanctify it, as he had blessed and sanctified the seventh day in Paradise? Or did he come forth in his majesty, as he had done on Sinai, and say in the hearing of the apostles and early Christians, *the first day is the Sabbath — keep that day holy to the Lord?* And was such a command as this put on record by the inspired writers, and transmitted from one generation to another, as the fourth command in the

Decalogue was? Nothing like this has taken place; nor have we thought it necessary. How then have we been brought to give up the *seventh* day as a Sabbath, and to keep the *first* in its place? We find no command of Christ or his apostles. And we find no *express declaration* of Scripture, that the apostles and first Christians uniformly kept the first day as a Sabbath. But we are satisfied, because there are several things in the Acts and Epistles, which plainly *imply* that they did so; and because, in addition to this, we have clear *historical* evidence that the Lord's day was generally observed by the early Christian churches, and that the seventh day Sabbath gradually fell into disuse. Thus, on the ground of what was practised by those who lived near the apostles, and who had the best advantages to form a correct judgment, and because too, though without any *express declaration* of Scripture, there is reason to think, that such was the practice of the apostles; we feel ourselves authorized and obliged to observe the first day of the week as a Sabbath. But would Christians have been so easily satisfied of their obligations to keep the Christian Sabbath, had there not been a weekly Sabbath, a sacred day, enjoined by divine command, and uniformly observed by God's people in preceding ages? The more seriously I have reflected on this subject, the more fully have I become satisfied, that the previous existence of similar observances must have produced such an effect on the minds of the first Jewish Christians, as perfectly to prepare them to receive the Christian Sabbath and Infant Baptism, without any additional enactment, or any direct, explicit declaration whatever in their favor. But they could not have been prepared for this, had these institutions been altogether new. And it seems to me very plain, that no one can prove the divine authority of the Christian Sabbath, without using arguments very similar to those which we use in support of Infant Baptism.

Having considered the proper mode of reasoning, and suggested what seemed necessary to prepare the way for a fair discussion; I shall proceed to the considerations which bear directly upon the subject of Infant Baptism. In treating this subject, I shall take

the liberty to follow my own way of thinking, and shall lay before you those considerations which have had the greatest influence on my own mind, and which, after much anxious inquiry, have conducted me to a satisfactory conclusion.

The first consideration I shall suggest is, that *the rite of Infant Baptism manifestly corresponds with the natural relation between parents and children.* It is not enough to say, that there is no inconsistency between the two things, and that the relation of parents and children can afford no objection against Infant Baptism. For nothing is more evident than that this rite has a perfect *suitableness* to the relation of parents and children. This relation is of such a nature, and attended with such circumstances, that Infant Baptism becomes obviously and in the highest degree just and proper. I acknowledge that this argument does not, by itself, prove Infant Baptism to have been appointed by God, and to be obligatory upon Christians. But it shows that its appointment would have a perfect fitness and propriety. It shows, too, that we ought readily to fall in with the practice, if there is any indication of God's will in its favor, and that a lower degree of evidence is sufficient to bring us under obligation to adopt it, than if it had no such obvious fitness.

This view of the subject cannot be considered as objectionable by any one, who well considers how we form our opinions in regard to many other subjects. How, for instance, do we reason in regard to a subject before referred to, that is, *female communion?* We say, it is manifestly *suitable;* that pious women have the same reason to commemorate the death of Christ, as pious men; that the ordinance being enjoined in general terms is a sufficient indication of the divine will in regard to it, and that pious women, having all the general reasons to partake of the ordinance with pious men, have a fair title to partake, on the ground of the general appointment, without waiting for a command addressed particularly to them. But we could not think such a conclusion correct, if there were no evident fitness in the thing itself, and if an express divine precept, enjoining female communion, were considered to be essential.

The same as to the Lord's day. We perceive it to be altogether *just* and *proper*, that so important an event as the resurrection of Christ should be commemorated, and that the day on which it took place, should be consecrated to the honor of the Saviour by all his followers. In this way we are prepared to think favorably of changing the Sabbath from the *seventh* day to the *first*. And being thus impressed with the fitness of the thing, we are easily satisfied with the circumstances, which indicate that this is the will of God. When we find that the apostles and first Christians observed that day, and that it became the practice of the regular Christian churches universally to do so; we feel at once that the practice was suitable; that it corresponded with the nature and ends of the Christian religion, and that what the apostles and first Christians did, manifested the pleasure of God; and so without suspicion, we fall in with the prevailing practice. But had we no such perception of the fitness of the thing; how could prevailing practice have such an effect upon us?

In forming our judgment on such a subject as this, we should keep in mind, that God has given us reason and moral sense, and thus rendered us capable of discerning the relations of things, and of determining, in most cases, what is suitable to those relations; and that it is often in this way only, that we are able to discover the will of God.

The relation existing between parents and children is seldom taken into serious consideration; and it is still more seldom the case, that its nature and importance are rightly apprehended. A little attention to the circumstances of this relation, particularly to the affections which attend it, the obligations involved in it, and the consequences resulting from it, will satisfy any one, that it is among the most interesting and momentous relations on earth.

Every human being from the commencement of his existence, is the object of an affection indescribably ardent and tender. This affection which lodges in the hearts of parents, and results necessarily from the constitution they have received from their Creator, is universal, except where that constitution is dreadfully perverted. Whenever a child is born, an affection springs up in the hearts of

his parents, which will afford protection to his weakness and supply to his wants; which will prompt them to constant, untiring labors, and make it even a pleasure to forego the common gratifications of life, and to endure self-denial, watching, and fatigue, for the sake of that helpless being who is intrusted to their care. For a time this affection operates without rational intercourse, and without any return of service or even of gratitude from the offspring. Parental affection is fixed and durable. Causes which extinguish other kinds of affection, generally leave this in all its strength, and often prove an occasion of increasing its warmth and activity. The affection of parents, instead of ceasing with the feebleness and the wants of their offspring, extends its kind regards over his whole life, and when regulated by religious principle, aims at nothing less than to promote his happiness through an immortal existence.

Now the mere fact that the relation of parents to their offspring is attended with an affection of so unparalleled a nature, marks this relation as one of vast consequence, and indicates that God intended to make it subservient to the most important ends in his government.

This relation involves high obligations. The precepts of God's word on this subject are such as sound reason must approve. Parents are required to *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* The duties of parents are so various and constant, that, if rightly performed, they must occupy a considerable portion of human life; and they are so arduous, as to require their diligent and pious efforts. These duties are so important, that they cannot be neglected, without consequences exceedingly perilous to the interests of the church and the world. The duties of parents, and the influence which they ought to possess over their children, must generally be considered as the chief means of forming the character of the rising generation, and preparing them for usefulness; the chief means of saving the souls of men, and propagating the Christian religion from one generation to another.

These remarks are all confirmed by the word and providence of God. From the beginning of the world, the character and condition of children have generally resulted from the conduct of

parents. The peculiar character of a tribe or nation has commonly been derived from the character of its father or head. This extends to the religious, as well as to the social and secular character. The history of the Christian church shows that after it has once been established in any place, it has chiefly depended for its continuance and increase upon the labors of parents to promote the piety of their children.

The foregoing remarks are not offered as proof that God does in fact require that children should be *baptized;* but to show that Infant Baptism has an obvious fitness. If the relation between parents and children is so vastly important, it is manifestly proper that it should have some mark set upon it, to show in what estimation it is held by the Creator of the world. And as this relation involves the most momentous duties, and the highest interests of the soul, it is manifestly proper that it should be marked by a *religious* rite. If a public religious rite may be properly used for the purpose of impressing truth or duty on the minds of men in any case, it may be in this. Thus the considerations above stated, though they do not directly prove Infant Baptism to be a divine institution, are sufficient to show that such a religious rite entirely corresponds with the nature and design of the relation between parents and children, and that it is very fit and reasonable that such a relation and the duties involved in it should be marked by some expressive sign.

The second consideration which I shall offer is, that *the relation between parents and children, and the consecration of both to God, was actually marked by a divinely appointed and significant rite, through the Patriarchal and Mosaic economy.*

Keep in mind, that *the same rite was appointed for parents and children.* Consider too, that this rite, intended for children as well as parents, did not originate in the *Mosaic ritual*, but in the family of Abraham, the father of all believers whether Jews or gentiles, and was practised among the Israelites from generation to generation.

It is equally true that the import of the rite was not varied at all by the application of it to *servants.* For they stood in a near relation to their masters, and were circumcised on account of that

relation. The rite surely could not denote anything less in reference to children, because it was applied in a secondary way to others.

This rite evidently had a *primary* relation to *spiritual* blessings. It was a confirmation of that most gracious and spiritual promise which God made to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed. Circumcision*, the Apostle tells us, *was a seal of the righteousness of faith which Abraham had while uncircumcised.* God's covenant with Abraham and his posterity did indeed include a great variety of *temporal* blessings; particularly, their title to the land of Canaan, and all their institutions and laws relating to their worldly state. And it is equally true that all necessary temporal blessings are promised to believers under the new covenant. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." But these temporal blessings in both cases are to be considered only as appendages of the spiritual good secured to the obedient by the divine promises. The promises of the former economy were in truth as high and spiritual, as any contained in the Christian Scriptures; and the principal one, *I will be your God*, is referred to in the New Testament, as involving the most precious gospel blessings. Heb. 8: 10. 2 Cor. 6: 16. See also Isa. 44: 3. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." The Old Testament economy contained the most spiritual and holy precepts. It contained the decalogue, and various other commands, requiring holiness of heart and life. The character which God exhibited was the same under the former dispensation, as under the latter. The character which he required of those who were under the former economy, was the same as he required of the followers of Christ. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Deut. 6: 5. Lev. 20: 7. Matt. 22: 37. 1 Pet. 1: 15, 16.

It may indeed be alleged, that the Israelites, as a nation, were not holy; that they did not render to God a sincere spiritual service, and that the economy, under which they were placed, did not secure to them spiritual blessings. This is true. But this is not to be charged to that system of laws and rites and promises, which

God gave for their benefit, but to themselves. Had they conformed to the nature and design of that economy, circumcision would have been an actual confirmation of spiritual blessings to them. Now surely we are not to judge of the former economy from the character of those who were placed under it. As a general fact, their character was directly *contrary* to the nature and design of the economy;—as really so, as the character of the bulk of nominal Christians in the most corrupt age of the church has been contrary to the design of the *Christian* economy. But who would think of urging the degraded, corrupt character exhibited at any time by nominal Christians, as a proof that the *Christian* dispensation was not intended to be of a spiritual nature, or that its rites were not intended to be signs of spiritual blessings? No distinction can be more obvious, than that between the real nature of a divine economy, and the manner in which it is used by those who are placed under it. As to the former economy, the question is not, what was the actual character of the Israelites; but what was the character which they *ought* to have possessed,—the character which *the precepts* and *the spirit* of the dispensation *required* them to possess? Now if, from generation to generation, they had been obedient and holy according to the laws of that economy; who could ever have doubted that the economy was a spiritual one, and that circumcision was a seal of spiritual blessings? So far as they kept God's covenant, it was in fact a seal of spiritual blessings both to parents and children. It set forth God's design, that the true religion, with all its attendant benefits, should, by means of parental faithfulness and prayer, be transmitted from one generation to another. And if the Israelites universally from Abraham to Christ had truly conformed to that divine institution; then circumcision would have been in fact what it was designed to be, a confirmation of God's promise, *I will be a God to thee and thy seed.* And let me repeat it, that the nature and design of a rite, instituted by God, cannot be altered by the disobedience and perverseness of men.

I well know that there are some passages in the New Testament, especially in the Epistle to the Galatians, and to the

Hebrews, which seem at first view to militate against what I have advanced in regard to the spiritual nature of the Mosaic economy. This is a subject which requires a longer and more minute investigation than would be proper in this place. I must therefore refer you to what others have written, after suggesting two things, which I think very obvious.

First. The Apostle in his whole argument in Gal. iii. makes a distinction between the *Mosaic* economy, or law, and God's covenant with *Abraham;* and he takes special pains to teach, that the covenant with Abraham was *unalterable;* that believers in Christ come under that very covenant; that they are *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise, that is, the promise made to *Abraham;* and that it is the blessing of Abraham, — the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed, which all believers inherit. It must therefore be obvious, that whatever there was in the Mosaic economy which was earthly and changeable, *God's covenant with Abraham was spiritual and immutable*, securing all the blessings to which believers in Christ are entitled. And it must not be forgotten, that circumcision was first appointed to be the seal, not of the *Mosaic* economy, but of *this spiritual and immutable covenant of God with Abraham.*

Second. When in Heb. viii. the writer says, that the first covenant, (evidently meaning the Mosaic or Sinai covenant,) was faulty and ineffectual, that it had waxed old and was ready to vanish away; he evidently refers to the *Levitical Priesthood* and the *ancient ritual*, which were both appointed only for temporary purposes, and were to cease after the death of Christ. How then does the passage prove that a spiritual and unchangeable covenant, the same as the one made with Abraham, was not contained in the Mosaic dispensation? The spiritual precepts and promises found there, prove that such a covenant was contained. Accordingly, circumcision, though it was connected with the Mosaic ritual and made a part of it, was still, through that whole dispensation, what it was originally designed to be, *a confirmation to all true saints of the spiritual blessings secured by God's covenant with Abraham.*

The general position then stands firm, that *the covenant, of which circumcision was appointed to be the seal, was spiritual, gracious and immutable.**

* This principle is ably and, I think, unanswerably defended by Rev. Ralph Wardlaw, D. D. in his Dissertation on Infant Baptism.

LECTURE CXII.

INFANT BAPTISM.

We now come to the introduction of the Christian dispensation, and the appointment of Baptism as a sign of discipleship to Christ, or, which is the same thing, a seal of God's covenant with believers.

I remark, first, that *the Christian religion was evidently founded upon the Old Testament Scriptures, and was, for substance, a continuation of the religion there taught.* Christ frequently declares, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament make known his character, and the principles of his gospel. He appeals to the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms, for the confirmation of what he taught. The apostles do the same, and clearly make it known to be their wish, that the soundness of their instructions should be tested by the Scriptures. And we well know that, whenever they speak of the Scriptures, they refer to the Old Testament. Carefully peruse the gospels, the Acts of the apostles, and the epistles, and see in what manner Christ and the apostles treat the Scriptures, and how they labor to show, that Christianity is not a *new religion*, but, as to its substance, is the very religion which was taught in the law and the prophets; — from which consideration they justly conclude, that no man can reject Christianity without rejecting the Old Testament Scriptures, and that no one can truly believe those Scriptures without believing Christianity.

I cannot think that any quotations in proof of the foregoing

remarks will be thought necessary by those who are conversant with the Scriptures.

From such a view of the subject it seems very natural to conclude, that any general principle of religion, and any practice, established under the former economy, will be continued, though it may be in a different form, under the Christian economy, unless the reasons have ceased on which that principle or practice was founded, or unless God has expressly set it aside. For example; it is just to conclude that *public worship*, which was established under the former dispensation, will be continued under the latter, though doubtless with such changes in the *form*, as the peculiarities of the Christian economy shall require. If Christ or his apostles ever intimated to the Jews, that a change was called for in the spirit of their religion, they did it, unquestionably, with reference to the corruptions and abuses which had prevailed, not with reference to the religion which was actually taught in the Scriptures.

The institution of the Sabbath, which has already been referred to, furnishes another illustration of the propriety of our reasoning on the present subject. This institution which was established in Paradise, rests on the authority of God and on the essential principles of our intellectual and moral nature. There must be a *sacred day*, — a day devoted to the worship of God. There is the same reason for it under both dispensations. The change then, if there be any, must relate to outward *form* and *circumstance*. By the will of him who is the Lord of the Sabbath, the particular day to be observed under the Christian economy is different, and the observance attended with fewer and simpler ceremonies. Still there is a sacred day every week under the present dispensation, as really as there was under the Jewish or Patriarchal. In respect to the necessity and utility of such a day, and the command of God to observe it, there is no change.

The same appears to be true in regard to the subject under consideration. There must be a seal of God's gracious covenant, and of the relation which his people sustain to him. The importance of such a seal to promote in the highest degree the ends of

religion, must be obvious to all who are acquainted with the constitution of the human mind; and it must be equally obvious in all ages. It is reasonable therefore to think, that, under both dispensations, God's covenant will have a seal, whatever difference there may be in the form of it. Why should not the momentous and unalterable relation of children to parents, and of both to God, be marked by a religious rite now, as well as formerly? According to the will of God, that rite, under the former economy, was circumcision; under the present, it is baptism. The general import of both is the same.

I remark, secondly, *that we can by no means conclude that our Saviour did not give his apostles specific instructions on this or any other subject, merely because such instructions are not preserved in the records of the New Testament.* The Evangelists have given us no more than a very summary account of what Christ taught during his public ministry. They could do nothing more than this, as John plainly suggests at the end of his gospel, where he tells us, that *if all should be written, the world itself could not contain the books.* We are not, however, to infer from this, that the instructions of Christ, which are not found in the sacred records, were unimportant; or that they had no effect, or were of no use; or even that their effect does not reach to the present day, or that they are of no use to us. They were designed to have their primary and direct influence on the apostles themselves, who were to be teachers of the Christian religion, and were, at the commencement of Christ's reign, to give a right direction to all the affairs of his kingdom. Accordingly, the effect of Christ's instructions to them must have appeared in the constitution and form of the churches which they established. In various respects this is the only method in which it is possible for us to determine what Christ's instructions were. And under proper restrictions, it is a just and satisfactory method.

From the *effects* which the apostles produced, we may learn what they *did*. And from what they *did* we may learn what instructions they received from Christ. In this way we proceed in regard to the Passover, and the Seventh-day Sabbath. There is

no record of any direction of Christ to set aside either of them. But we find that they were set aside among those Christians whom the apostles taught. From this we may reasonably conclude what instructions the apostles gave; and then, what they received from Christ. And we form this conclusion respecting the last, without the record of any command or counsel from Christ to his apostles, or from the apostles to Christian converts. We find, further, that Christians did, in some special sense, observe the first day of the week. This the sacred records clearly show. We learn from other sources, that while the Seventh-day Sabbath gradually ceased to be observed in the primitive churches, the Lord's day was observed in its place. From these circumstances we infer what the apostles taught the first Christians, and what they themselves were taught by Christ, or by the Holy Spirit. And I venture to say, if the New Testament had been altogether silent respecting the first day of the week being made a sacred day, and if we only found that the Christian church does now uniformly observe the Lord's day as a Sabbath, and that this has been the case from the time of the first Christian churches; we should be satisfied that such was the will of Christ; that he had so instructed the apostles, and that they had so instructed the first Christians.

The same general remarks apply to the present subject. Be it so, that the New Testament does not contain any definite instructions of Christ to the apostles, or of the apostles to Christians, in regard to the baptism of little children. Can we infer from this, that no definite instructions were given? Such instructions might have produced the effect designed, first, upon the apostles themselves, and then, through them, upon the minds of Christian converts. And it may remain for us to learn what those instructions of Christ and the apostles were, from what we discover to have been the practice of the first churches. We should unquestionably reason so now, in a similar case. Suppose, without any previous knowledge of the subject, we should visit a place in Africa, where a Christian missionary had successfully preached, and founded a church, he having been the only minister of the

gospel who had labored in that place. And suppose our visit to take place some time after his death. Would not the prevailing usages of that church show, to our perfect satisfaction, what instructions he gave? If we should find it the practice of that church to baptize only adult believers, and to do it by immersion; should we not conclude at once, that the minister who taught them was a Baptist? But if we should find that the church, thus founded by his faithful labors, and guided by his wisdom, was in the practice of baptizing their infant children, and that this had been their uniform practice from the beginning; should we not conclude that he *taught* them to baptize their children? Most certainly men in general, of whatever denomination, would judge in this manner, and would be satisfied what the instructions of any distinguished missionary were, from the prevailing usages of a church founded by his influence. And such would be the conclusion we should form, for a long time after his decease, unless the influence of subsequent teachers of different views, or some other visible causes, had operated to produce a change. Indeed it is clear, that the form and usages of a church in any place must be derived from the principal teacher, and conformed to his views. And if those Christians who deny Infant Baptism, could, among the treasures of antiquity, discover a history bearing every mark of authenticity, and containing a particular account of the churches in Asia Minor immediately after the days of the apostles, and if that history should plainly affirm that those churches never baptized children, and that the children of believers, on coming to adult years and professing their faith in Christ, were *then* baptized; I say, if those who deny Infant Baptism could find from authentic records, that such was the usage of those churches; they would think this to be a very valuable discovery, and the uniform practice of those churches to baptize adult believers, and those only, to be a valid proof that they were so taught by the apostles.

But I shall now proceed to argue the point from the inspired records, just as they are. My position is, that *the Scriptures of the New Testament, understood according to just rules of inter-*

pretation, clearly show that the children of believers are to be baptized.

The rule of interpretation, which is of the highest consequence, and which will aid us most in discovering the true meaning of the Scriptures in relation to every subject, particularly the one now before us, is, that *we put ourselves, as far as may be, in the place of those who gave instruction, and of those who received it.*

You will easily perceive the importance and necessity of this rule. For in numberless instances, a declaration or direction derives its peculiar meaning from the consideration of the person who speaks, or of those to whom he speaks. Who does not know that the same combination of words has a very different meaning in one place from what it has in another? Even when the general sense of the words is the same, the circumstances of the case must determine the extent of meaning which they bear, or what is implied in the application of them to the subject in hand. Some fact, some prevalent custom, or habit of thinking, may give them a specific signification; and without taking such fact or custom into view, we may miss the exact sense and import of the words. In how many instances should we be at a loss respecting the meaning of historians, poets, and orators, without taking into account the age and place in which they lived, and the character, laws, and usages, of the people with whom they were conversant, and for whom they wrote.

As a single illustration of the importance of this principle; look at a text in the Old Testament, in which the observance of the *Sabbath* is mentioned; for example, Is. 56: 2, "Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it." How do you ascertain which day is meant? Simply by considering what previous instructions and commands had been given on the subject, and what their usage was. In this way you are satisfied that the *seventh* day was meant. Look now at a law, in an English or American statute book, requiring the people to abstain from secular business on the *Sabbath*. How do you ascertain which day is meant here? By considering what has been the

usage of Christians generally, and particularly of that people for whom the law was made. In this way you are satisfied that the *first* day of the week must be meant.

Come now to the subject. Christ appointed baptism to be administered to all who should become proselytes to his religion, that is, to all Christians; and when he was about leaving his apostles, who were to be employed as the instruments of converting the world, he gave them this commission; "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The word μαθητεύσατε, rendered *teach*, properly signifies, *make disciples; proselyte; convert to the Christian religion.* The commission then is this; "*Go ye, proselyte, or make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" This command was given by one who was born a Jew, who was educated among the Jews, and was perfectly acquainted with all their institutions and laws, with their customs and usages, and with the dispensations of divine providence towards them. And the command was addressed *to Jews.* Now whatever there was in this general circumstance, which could have an influence upon the meaning of the command, or which would naturally cause it to be understood in one way or another, is worthy of special attention.

Consider, then, that the Jews had long been accustomed to make proselytes from paganism to their religion. The obligation to do this had been brought to view in the divine law, and rules had been given for the proper treatment of proselytes. To make proselytes was regarded as a great object; and the efforts of the Jews to bring others to embrace their religion were crowned with extensive success. Proselytes were numerous both in Greece and in Rome; and it seems that, after the persecuting reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, some whole nations, as the Idumeans, Iturcans, and Moabites, professed the Jewish faith. And whenever gentiles embraced the Jewish religion, they were treated in regard to circumcision, according to the Jewish law; that is, they were circumcised, — *parents and children.* This was the law of

the Jews; and this was the uniform practice. Hence it must be easy to determine how Christian Jews would be likely to understand the duty of proselyting idolaters and unbelievers to the true religion. Suppose that God, previously to the Christian dispensation, had selected twelve Jews, and sent them forth to convert Greeks and Romans to their religion, and without any mention of children, had merely given them this commission: Go ye, *proselyte* and *circumcise* them. Would they not have understood such a commission as requiring them to circumcise the *children* of converted Greeks and Romans? Unquestionably they would. And why? Not because they were children; but *because they were Jews, and had always been accustomed to the circumcision of children, as well as parents.* In obedience to this divine command, they would have gone to the people specified, and in all the instances in which men were made proselytes, would have circumcised them and their children.

Again. Suppose, in such a case, a command had been given, which included baptism with circumcision; thus: *Go ye, and proselyte those nations, circumcising and baptizing them.* Still not a word about *children;* but simply, Go and proselyte those nations to Judaism, *circumcising and baptizing them.* Most certainly they would have understood that baptism, as well as circumcision, was to be applied *to proselytes and their children.*

But suppose that baptism had been put in the place of circumcision, as the sign to be put upon proselytes to Judaism; and so the command to those Jewish teachers had been; *Go ye, proselyte and baptize the people of Greece and Rome.* Must they not have understood the command in the same way? Surely those who were acquainted with the commands and institutions which God gave to Abraham and to Moses, and who had always been accustomed to observe them, could have had no doubt, that the rite which marked the relation of proselytes to God, was to be applied to their children also.

Thus far, all must have the same opinion. Such a divine command to Jews before the time of Christ, whether it appointed circumcision only, or circumcision together with baptism, or baptism

instead of circumcision, as a mark to be applied to those who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, must have been understood as intended to be applied also to *the children* of proselytes, though no mention was made of children in the command.

I am now only availing myself of one of the most important principles of interpretation, and attempting to show what influence must have been produced upon the meaning of Christ's direction by the circumstance, that he was a *Jew*, and that he gave the direction to *Jews*, whose laws and usages had been what the Scriptures represent.

But to illustrate this principle still further; suppose it to have been the appointment of our Saviour, after his public ministry began, that circumcision should be applied to converts to Christianity, as it had been to converts to Judaism; and suppose him to have said to his apostles; "Go ye, proselyte all nations, and *circumcise* them," — making no mention of *children*. Could the apostles have doubted a moment, whether circumcision was meant to be applied to the *children* of proselytes? But why should we suppose they would put a different construction upon the commission they received from Christ, because *baptism* was made the sign of proselytes, instead of *circumcision?* There is evidently nothing in the import of the sign, which would require any difference in its application. For baptism is appointed simply as a sign, to be put upon those who are proselyted to Christianity. If *circumcision* had been continued, and Christ had commanded it to be put upon *Christian* proselytes, as it had been upon proselytes to the religion of Moses, the meaning and use of it would have been perfectly the same, as the meaning and use of baptism.

But there is another consideration, which may help to show us still further, how the apostles must have understood their commission to baptize converts to Christianity; namely, the *previous practice of the Jews to baptize proselytes and their children.*

The evidence of such a practice among the Jews has been very satisfactory to most men of distinguished learning and judgment. Knapp, in his Theology, gives the following brief view of the arguments in proof of proselyte baptism; namely; "The unani-

mous testimony of all the Rabbins; the universality of this practice among the Jews of the second century; the striking similarity of the Jewish expressions concerning the baptism of proselytes, to those which occur in the New Testament respecting the Christian rite; and the circumstance that Josephus, in his account of John the Baptist, does not express the least surprise at the practice of baptism, as a new and unwonted ceremony." Knapp suggests also, what I think to be deserving of special consideration, that if the baptism of proselytes was customary among the Jews at or before the time of Christ, many things could be explained more clearly from this circumstance, than in any other way.

Some have doubted whether the baptism of proselytes was in use before the Christian era, because the earliest of the Jewish writers who mention the practice, lived some time after Christ.

In regard to this subject, let the following things be considered.

1. The Rabbins unanimously assert that the baptism of proselytes had been practised by the Jews in all ages, from Moses down to the time when they wrote. Now these writers must have been sensible that their contemporaries, both Jews and Christians, knew whether such a practice had been prevalent or not. And had it been known that no such practice had existed; would not some Jews have been found, bold enough to contradict such a groundless assertion of the Rabbins? At least, would there not have been some *Jewish Christians*, fired with the love of truth, and jealous for the honor of a sacred rite first instituted by Christ, who would have exposed to shame those who falsely asserted that a similar rite had existed for more than a thousand years? But neither of these things was done.

2. Had not the Jews been accustomed to baptize proselytes previously to the Christian era, it is extremely improbable that they would have adopted the practice afterwards. For their contempt and hatred of *Christianity* exceeded all bounds, and must have kept them at the greatest possible distance from copying a rite peculiar to *Christians*.

3. It seems to have been perfectly *consistent* and *proper* for

the Jews to baptize proselytes. For their divine ritual enjoined various purifications by washing, or *baptism*. And as they considered all gentiles to be *unclean*, how could they do otherwise than understand the divine law to require, that when any of them were proselyted to the Jewish religion, they should receive the same sign of purification, as was, in so many cases, applied to themselves ?*

I will only add, that the more carefully I have considered the arguments which prove proselyte baptism, and the objections urged against it, the stronger has been my conviction that it was practised.

If then it had been the uniform custom of the Jews to baptize proselytes to their religion, as we have so much reason to think ; it is clear that the baptism of proselytes by John and by Christ was no new thing. It is at any rate clear that baptism, *as a religious rite*, had been familiarly known among the Jews from the time of Moses. So that the rite which John the Baptist instituted was not by any means a new rite. The question put to him (John 1: 25) implies, that baptism was not regarded by the Jews at that time as a new rite. — It was this rite, long used for ceremonial purification, and also in the case of proselytes to the Jewish religion, which John applied to those Jews who listened to his instructions, and gave signs of repentance. Afterwards Christ ordained, that this same rite, which had thus been used among the Israelites for purification, and thus applied to converted gentiles and to Jews who repented under the preaching of John, should from that time be applied to all in every part of the world, who embraced Christianity. The work of proselyting men to the true religion had before been carried on within narrow limits. It was now to be carried on extensively ; and baptism, in the Christian form, was now to be administered to all proselytes. " Go ye,

* I beg leave to refer those who wish to examine the subject more particularly, to Lightfoot's Hor. Heb. on Matt. iii. and John iii. Wall's Hist. of Infant Baptism, Introduction. Gale's Reflections on Wall's History: Michaelis Dogm. § 180. Ernesti Vindiciæ arbit. div. § 49. Jahn's Archæology. Wetstein on Matt. 3: 6. Gill's Body of Divinity. R. Robinson's History of Baptism, and other works on the same subject.

and proselyte all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In judging of the true meaning and intent of this commission, the apostles would naturally consider in what manner baptism had been administered; and particularly, its having been applied to *proselytes* and *their children*. This last circumstance, in addition to the other with which they were so familiar, that of having children as well as parents consecrated to God by circumcision, must have had a direct and decisive influence upon the construction which the apostles put upon their commission, and must have led them to conclude, that under the Christian dispensation, *children* as well as parents were to be devoted to God by baptism, unless some contrary instruction was given to prevent such a conclusion. Knapp says; "If Christ in his command to baptize all, Matt. xxviii, had wished children to be excepted; he must have expressly said this. For since the first disciples of Christ, as native Jews, knew no other way than for children to be introduced into the Israelitish church by circumcision; it was natural that they should extend this to baptism, if Christ did not expressly forbid it. Had he therefore wished that it should not be done, he would surely have said so in definite terms."

Another consideration which shows, that it must have been perfectly consistent for the apostles to understand their commission in the manner above stated, is, that the Scriptures so often represent parents and children as receiving the same treatment from divine providence, and as being closely connected together in respect to their most important interests. "I will be your God, and the God of your seed." — "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands," — that is, thousands of generations, "of them that love me and keep my commandments." "That he may prolong his days, he and his children." "Keep my commandments, that it may be well with thee and with thy children after thee." "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." With such representations as these the course of divine providence had

a striking correspondence. It was a general fact that, whether mercies or judgments came upon men, their children were partakers of the same. And this principle of the divine administration had a special reference to the interests of religion. Now the apostles were perfectly acquainted with this principle. They had the highest reverence for those sacred writings, which exhibited such views of the connection between parents and children; and they had been brought up under a divine economy, which afforded continual confirmation of what their Scriptures taught in regard to this connection. What violence then must they have done to all those habits of thinking and feeling, which they had derived from the word and providence of God, had they supposed, that parents and children were no longer to be connected together in the concerns of religion, or in public and sacred transactions, or that the consecration of parents and children to God was no longer to be marked, as it always had been, with the sign of the dispensation under which they were placed!

It is no objection to this train of thought, that the promises, above recited, were *conditional*. For they were no more conditional in regard to *children*, than in regard to *parents*. And the fact that a promise or covenant has proper conditions, is surely no reason why it should not have a token or seal.

LECTURE CXIII.

INFANT BAPTISM.

The general position, which I have endeavored to support is this; that the apostles, being native Jews, and having the impressions and habits of thinking which pious Jews would necessarily derive from a familiar acquaintance with the usages of the nation, with the rites enjoined in their sacred writings, and with the representations there made respecting the divine conduct towards parents and children, must have understood their commission to baptize proselytes, as intended to include children with their parents.

The conclusiveness of the mode of reasoning which has been pursued, rests on a principle of interpretation, which is of the first importance; namely; that we should place ourselves, as far as possible, in the circumstances of those who wrote the Scriptures, and of those to whom they were addressed, and in this way endeavor to ascertain the meaning of what was written. From Ecclesiastical History we can derive a very conclusive argument, that the apostles did in fact understand the institution of baptism, as intended for believers and their children. But why did they understand it in this manner? I answer, that without the supposition of any direct and explicit instruction on the subject from Christ, there were reasons, in the circumstances in which the apostles were placed, sufficient to satisfy them, that such was the design of the institution. Take the New Testament just as it is, and consider what instruction Christ gave his apostles in regard to

baptism, particularly his final commission to them, *to go and proselyte all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* The proper inquiry is not how Greeks and Romans would have understood such a commission; for the apostles were neither Greeks nor Romans, and their Lord who commissioned them, was neither a Greek nor a Roman. Our inquiry is, how such a commission would naturally be understood by those who were, both by birth and education, *Jews;* how it would be understood by those, who had derived their opinions from the Jewish Scriptures and Jewish usages, and who were the willing servants of one who was himself a Jew, and the King of the Jews? To me it appears evident, that the circumstances of the case, taken together, must have had a decisive influence in favor of the baptism of infants. For it was a well known fact, that the seal of God's gracious covenant had, from Abraham to that time, been applied to children. And this application of it was manifestly grounded on a permanent, unchangeable principle, that is, the natural relation between parents and children, and the propriety and duty of both being consecrated to God. The seal which was appointed to be put upon God's people under the reign of Christ, was of the same general import with the one previously used. In this view, therefore, there was the same apparent reason for applying it to the children of God's people then, as before. As to its *form*, the seal was changed; but as to its *import*, it was the same. The relation of good men to God, which was marked by this sign, was the same; and the relation of their children to them was the same. How then could the apostles doubt that children were still to receive the sign of the covenant, as they had formerly? With their impressions and their usages; with their sacred regard to the principles established by the Scriptures and by the divine administration; particularly, with their habit of looking upon children as being, by God's appointment, closely united to their parents in respect to privileges and prospects; they must, as it seems to me, have understood the command of Christ to baptize Christian proselytes, as extending to their children also. Had the promise of God, "*I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed,*" or

had the circumcision of the children of God's people in connection with that promise, rested on any principle which appertained to the Patriarchal or Jewish dispensation in distinction from the Christian; the apostles, placed at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, and instructed as they were in regard to its nature, would have been satisfied of course, that children were no longer to be marked with the seal of God's covenant, or to be consecrated to him by any religious rite. But children's being comprehended with their parents in God's covenant, and their receiving the same mark of his covenant mercy and of consecration to him with their parents, all rested upon principles, which were *universal* and *immutable*, and which were to have as much prominence and influence under the reign of Christ, as before.

We have seen too, that the reasoning in this case is analogous to the reasoning commonly relied upon in relation to the Sabbath. The reason of a Sabbath day lies in the nature of man, and in his relation to God, and so is *immutable*. Consequently, the fourth command, however changed as to form, or circumstances, must continue as to *substance*. There must be *a sacred day*. Its becoming a Christian institution, and its being observed on the first day of the week, instead of the seventh, alters not the substance of the fourth command, nor the obligation of Christians to obey it. In the same manner, the reason for *Infant-consecration* lies in the nature and importance of the relation existing between children and their parents, and the relation of both to God, and so must be the same in all ages. This relation is as obvious and important, and as worthy of being marked by a religious rite *now*, as *formerly*. The sign of consecration now is *baptism;* and all the reasons in the case conspire to favor the application of it to children. Thus we apprehend the subject must have presented itself to the minds of the apostles and first Christians.

The view which we have adopted on this subject agrees best with the common method of understanding a *charter*, securing to any society of men the enjoyment of privileges. Such a charter is, by common consent, to be understood in the largest sense it will bear. Suppose the grant of privileges to a society is made in

general terms; that is, neither the individuals nor classes of men belonging to the society are specified. Now he, who is entrusted with the execution of the charter, is bound to bestow the privileges granted, on all who can fairly be considered as belonging to the society. And if any one should object to bestowing the chartered privileges on any individuals fairly comprehended within the society, it would be incumbent on him to show that those individuals were *expressly excepted* in the terms of the grant. Especially would it be proper to give this wide construction to the grant, if it were well known, that a previous grant, of the same nature, had *expressly required* this extensive application of its privileges. And it would be a stronger reason still for understanding the charter in such a sense, if the charter itself were evidently nothing more, than the modification, as to outward form, of a previous charter, which was more particular, and which, in the most explicit terms, secured its privileges to those, whose title is now called in question. In such a case, it would aid us much in determining the extent of meaning to be put upon the more general terms of the charter in its present form, to inquire how it was with the charter when first given. And if, on examination, it should be found that it was the will of the prince, that the privileges, originally granted, should be thus extensively applied; we should be satisfied at once that the privileges of the charter in its present form, were meant to be applied to an equal extent, unless there was *an express limitation*. And we should feel this satisfaction in the highest possible degree, if it appeared that the prince made the alteration in the form of the original charter, with the declared design of carrying its privileges to a larger extent.

Now all the considerations, which would lead us to give such a construction to the decree or charter here supposed, exist in relation to the subject of Infant Baptism. Our inquiry is, whether the language, employed in Christ's commission to baptize, would naturally be understood by his apostles, as extending to the children of believers. In answer to this inquiry, I have endeavored to make it appear, that all the circumstances of the case, which can be supposed to have had an influence upon the minds of the apostles,

were in favor of extending baptism to children; and that, before they could understand their commission in any other manner, they must have ceased to be children of Abraham, and must have erased from their minds all the impressions which had been made upon them by the word and providence of God.

The want of qualifications in children is a subject which deserves particular consideration. It is sufficient however for our present purpose to say, that a grant of privileges is often made to children *prospectively and conditionally*. In such cases, some mark or seal of those privileges is always deemed proper; and as to the privileges themselves, it is the common understanding, that they are secured to the children, and will actually belong to them, as soon as they become capable of enjoying them and have complied with the conditions on which they are granted.

Thus far we have considered merely those circumstances, which would be likely to influence the apostles in their understanding of the meaning of their commission. The reasoning has proceeded independently of the consideration of any other means which they might have had of knowing what was the will of their Lord.

But we must not stop here, but proceed to inquire, whether there was anything *in the previous instructions of Christ*, which could have contributed to satisfy the apostles in what light he regarded the children of his people, and in what manner he would have them treated; or which could have had any influence on their minds in regard to the subject before us.

The evidence I shall adduce is circumstantial, and by way of inference. But such evidence, it will be remembered, is often as satisfactory as any other.

I here refer you to Matt. 19: 13, 14. "Then were brought to Jesus little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them." The same thing is related in nearly the same manner by Mark, 10: 13, 14, and by Luke, 18: 15, 16. In Luke βρέφη is used, which denotes *young children, infants*. The phrase *kingdom of heaven*,

or *kingdom of God*, unquestionably signifies here, as it generally does in the Evangelists, *the Christian church*, or the kingdom which Christ set up in the world, in distinction from the society of God's people as it existed under the former dispensation.

That part of this passage which relates more directly to our subject, is the declaration at the close ; *τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ; for to such the kingdom of heaven belongs. They have a right to its blessings.*

The common rendering of the phrase is, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven ;" — which is understood to mean, that the kingdom of heaven *consists* or is *made up* of such. But the rendering which I have given and which I think more exactly agreeable to the sense of the original, is the same as is given to a similar phrase in Matt. 5: 3, 10. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, *ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven," the kingdom of heaven *belongs* to them ; they have a right to it. The same v. 10. "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, *ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν* ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ;" it belongs to them.

The whole verse then will stand thus ; "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me ; for to such the kingdom of heaven belongs." They are entitled to its privileges. In what particular sense the privileges of the Christian church belong to children will be considered in the sequel.

There are two ways of interpreting the declaration above mentioned. According to one of them, the declaration relates to those who *resemble little children ;* that is, to those who are docile, and free from ambition and malice. Those who adopt this sense of the passage, consider the declaration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," as signifying, that the kingdom of heaven belongs, not to *little children themselves*, but to those who are *like* them — to *real Christians*.

The principal arguments in favor of this interpretation are the following.

1. It is said, this interpretation is suggested by the passages in which Christ professedly undertakes to show what character his

disciples must possess, from the obvious qualities of a little child; as in Matt. 18: 1—6. The disciples, influenced by feelings of ambition, inquired who was the greatest in Christ's kingdom. Christ called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst, and said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall recieve one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the midst of the sea." Here the phrase, *παιδίον τοιοῦτον*, *such a child*, is used to signify one who resembles a child; that is, a disciple of Christ; as appears from the next verse. When therefore Christ says, in the passage under consideration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," or to such, that is, to such little children, the kingdom of heaven belongs; he must, it is thought, evidently mean the same, as in the place where he speaks expressly of those little ones who believe.

2. This interpretation of the passage, it is supposed, may be defended by what directly follows in the context, as Mark and Luke have it. According to these Evangelists, after Christ says, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not," he immediately adds: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." This is evidently intended to point out the character of his disciples; and why should not the declaration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," be understood as referring to the same? Kuinoel argues in favor of this sense of the passage, by what Christ says immediately after; "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein."

3. There is a general reason for giving the passage this sense, which, though I have not seen it distinctly mentioned by any author, seems to me deserving of consideration. I refer to the fact, that Christ so often took pains to instruct the people as to the nature of his kingdom, and the necessary qualifications of those who should be admitted to enjoy its blessings, and insisted upon the preëminent

importance of their being *like a little child*, or their being free from pride and malice, and possessing a humble, teachable disposition. Now it would seem that a declaration of Christ, showing to whom his kingdom belongs, would most naturally be intended to refer to the character of true disciples.

These, so far as I know, are the chief reasons which have been or can be urged in favor of this sense of the passage.

But there are weighty considerations against this interpretation, and in favor of that which makes the phrase, "of such is the kingdom of *heaven*," or to such the kingdom of heaven belongs, relate to children themselves, such as those that were brought to Christ.

The first reason I shall mention is, that τοιοῦτος properly denotes the nature or quality of the thing to which it is applied. "Innuit qualitatem rei." Schleusner. "*Such*, of this *kind* or *sort*." Robinson's Wahl. Accordingly, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, signifies, to *such children*, (παιδιών being understood,) to *such children* as these the privileges of Christ's kingdom, or of the gospel dispensation belong. The children who were brought to Christ must have been included. For if those privileges belonged to *such children* as they were, why not to *them?* This sense of the word may be illustrated from its current use in similar circumstances in the New Testament. Matt. 9: 8. "The multitude glorified God, who had given *such power to men;*" ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην, *power of such a kind*, or so glorious, — the very power which had just been displayed being intended. Mark 4: 33. "With many such parables spake he unto them;" τοιαύταις παραβολαῖς, *with many parables such as these.* Mark 6: 2, — "that such mighty works are wrought by his hands;" δυνάμεις τοιαῦται. Luke 9: 9. "Who is this of whom I hear such things;" τοιαῦτα, *things of such a nature as these.* Luke 13: 2. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered *such things?*" τοιοῦτα, things of so dreadful a nature as those mentioned. John 9: 16. "How can a man that is a sinner do *such miracles?*" τοιαῦτα σημεῖα, *miracles of so remarkable a nature* as those referred to. So in several passages in Romans, τοιαῦτα signifies *such things as those before mentioned.* This appears to be the sense of τοιοῦτος,

except when it is employed in a peculiar, unusual manner. Accordingly the phrase, "*of such* is the kingdom of heaven," must mean, *of such children as these*, the very children that were brought to Christ being included. The other sense of *τῶν τοιούτων*, namely, — *of those who are like these children*, that is, *of those who are not real children, but docile, humble men*, would be altogether an exception from the prevailing sense, and ought not to be adopted, without imperious reasons.

To satisfy ourselves as to the correctness of the meaning above given to the passage, let us suppose a variation in the predicate, while the subject, which is signified by *τοιούτων*, remains the same. Thus: Suffer little children to come unto me, — for *to such* God has given immortal souls; or, I came to save *such;* or, *such* are the objects of my kindness, and are to be trained up for me. Here it would be evident to all, that what was said was to be understood, not of those who had a temper resembling that of children, but of *children themselves*. And it must be so in the case under consideration, unless we are to assume, that what is denoted by *the kingdom of heaven*, cannot in any sense belong to *children*. But who will venture on such an assumption?

I allow that *παιδίον τοιοῦτον*, in Matt. 18: 5, may at first view appear to favor the other interpretation. But a careful attention to all the circumstances will lead, I think, to a different conclusion. "Jesus set a child in the midst of his disciples, and said, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Thus he directed the attention of those around him to the character of *a true disciple*. He represented a disciple, a member of his kingdom, to be like a little child, or to be a child in disposition. So that when, in the next verse, he says, "whosoever shall recieve *one such child*," the way was prepared for understanding him to mean *a person of a lowly disposition, a true disciple*. A person of this character had been made the subject of discourse,— the subject on which the thoughts of all were fixed. In these circumstances, *παιδίον τοιοῦτον* must of course have been taken to mean *a person of a childlike disposition*. And we find in verse 6, *ἕνα τῶν μικρῶν, one of these little ones*, is

expressly made to signify *one who believes in Christ.* He was speaking of such a one under the image of a child. And so he calls him a child.

There is then an obvious difference between the two passages. In one, the attention is fixed upon the character of a Christian, as *the principal subject.* In consequence of the method which was taken to illustrate his character, it became perfectly natural to call him *a child*, a *little child.* *Παιδίον τοιοῦτον*, thus introduced, must have been understood to signify *a disciple of Christ.* But, in the other passage, the subject presented before the mind was, *the little children themselves. They* were brought to Christ for his blessing. Upon *them* the attention of all was fixed. To *them* the objection of the disciples related. And surely what Christ said in the way of reply to that objection, must also have related to *them.* We rest then on a general principle; namely; that words are to be taken in their literal sense, unless there is a plain and satisfactory reason for taking them in a metaphorical sense. In Matt. 18: 5, there is such a reason. In Matt. 19: 14, there is not.

My second reason in favor of the interpretation we are now considering is, that the declaration, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," is expressly made the *reason* for suffering *little children themselves to come to him.* "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, *τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων*, *for* of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Both in the New Testament and in classic authors, *γάρ* is commonly used to denote the reason of what has been asserted or implied. The declaration, "*for* of such is the kingdom of heaven," according to the common acceptation of the words, must then be understood to be the *reason* for suffering the little children themselves to come to him. But how could this be a reason for suffering the little children to come to Christ, if *they* did not belong to his kingdom, but only certain others who resembled them? When, however, I say that their belonging to the kingdom of heaven is given as the reason why they should be suffered to come to Christ, I do not rely merely on the causative conjunction, *γάρ*; which, though it is commonly used in this sense, is sometimes used in a different sense. For even if this conjunction were omitted, the very collocation of

the words, and the obvious relation of the ideas contained in the former and in the latter part of the sentence, would clearly suggest, that the fact last mentioned was meant to be given as the reason of what was before said. The disciples forbid little children to come to Christ. He rebukes them, and says, — *Suffer the little children to come unto me; of such is the kingdom of heaven.* Now who could tell *why* this last should be said, if not meant to be a reason for suffering the little children to come? And it is to be remembered, that the little children did come, and that they came too in consequence of that very direction which Christ gave respecting them, and which was accompanied with such a reason.

These two considerations; namely; the prevailing use of the word τοιούτων, and the assigning of the last circumstance mentioned in the sentence, as the reason of the direction just before given, are of great weight, being the prominent considerations both of a philological and logical nature, which relate to the interpretation of the text. And if the last interpretation given is not the right one; then the word τοιούτων is not here used in its common sense, and the reason assigned by Christ for suffering the little children to come to him, seems to have no weight or pertinence.

Now considering that this interpretation of the text is supported by such considerations, we certainly ought not to reject it, and to adopt another, without very strong and conclusive reasons. But do such reasons exist?

Let us then inquire, whether there is any thing in *the nature of the case*, which is conclusive against this interpretation. Is the kingdom of heaven, or the Christian church such, as would make it inconsistent to suppose that it belongs, in any sense, to children? I answer in the negative; and the propriety of this answer may be made to appear in two ways.

First; Christ's kingdom may belong to little children, or they may be members of it, in the highest sense. They may have been designated as heirs of salvation, and the grace of God may have sealed them for heaven. No one can show that the actual salvation of little children is impossible, or improbable.

But secondly; without supposing that all children, or even all the children of believers, are actually members of Christ's kingdom in the highest sense; we may consider them as being related to it, and entitled to its privileges, in a lower, though a very important sense. We may consider them as sustaining a very near relation to their own parents, and through them to the church. They may have a right to the privileges of the church, somewhat as children may have a right to the privileges of a particular civil community, of which their parents are members. The children of pious parents may have such a connection with the church, as will secure to them special advantages for moral improvement, and a prospect specially favorable to their final salvation. It may be the design of God, that the Christian religion should be transmitted from one generation to another, and perpetuated in the world, generally, by the pious education of those who are the children of the church, rendered successful by the divine blessing.

Now this relation of children to the church, which I consider to be a matter of fact, is of vast importance to the interests of religion; and resulting, as it does, from the constitution of human beings, and the appointment of God respecting his kingdom, it is deserving of special notice. Such notice Christ seems to have given it in the passage under consideration. According to the views which have now been suggested, this passage may be paraphrased thus: — These little children, whom you would hinder from being brought to me for my blessing, are objects of my kindest regard. They, and such as they, stand in a near relation to my church. The kingdom, which I am setting up, is not to overlook them, but to embrace and cherish them. Peculiar favor was shown to children under the former dispensation; think not that less is to be shown to them under my reign. Look not upon them, therefore, with feelings of indifference. Strive not to deprive them of my blessing. Suffer them to come unto me; for to *such children* the privileges of the gospel dispensation belong.

My conclusion is, that as there is nothing in the nature of the case, which makes it impossible or inconsistent that little children should, in some important sense, hold a relation to the church,

or that the privileges of the Christian dispensation should belong to them; there is nothing in the nature of the case, which can furnish any valid objection against that interpretation of the text, which I have undertaken to support.

Again. Is there any conclusive objection against this interpretation from the other passage referred to, that is, Matt. 18: 1—6, in which Christ professedly makes use of a little child to inculcate upon his disciples the importance of humility? There can, I think, be no such objection, because the words of Christ recorded here, were spoken on an occasion and for a purpose entirely different from those of the passage we have been examining. There, that is, Matt. 19: 13, 14, little children were brought to Christ. His disciples wished to exclude them. But Christ disapproved of their conduct, and gave them a reason why the children should be permitted to come; and the reason was, that *to such as they were his kingdom belonged.* But in Matt. 18: 1—6, the disciples manifested the workings of ambition; and Christ, to teach them humility, took a little child, and set him before them, and told them that they must become unambitious and humble, like that child, or they could not be admitted into his kingdom. Here the character required of his disciples was the object and the only object Christ had in view. He brought forward a little child, merely to illustrate that character. In the other place, *the children themselves* were the objects of attention, and the evident design of Christ was to show how he regarded *them*, and, consequently, how he would have them regarded and treated by his disciples. Now because on one occasion, it was the object of Christ in all that he said to inculcate humility upon his followers; we cannot surely infer, that this and this only was his object on another occasion, which was in itself, and, in all its circumstances, different.

But it is said, referring to Mark 10: 15, that on the very occasion, on which Christ declared respecting little children, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," and immediately after he had declared this, he inculcated the same lesson of humility, and in nearly the same way, as on the other occasion. "Whosoever shall

not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, *ὡς παιδίον*, shall not enter therein."

My answer is, that Christ was accustomed to make use of all the means which were at hand, to inculcate duty upon his disciples, especially the duty of being humble; and that, after he had shown his affection for the little children who were brought to him, and had declared that the privileges of his kingdom belonged to them, it was perfectly according to his usual manner, to introduce another subject, and by means of the lovely children, who were then before him, and who were entitled to such consideration, to teach his disciples what disposition they must possess. It was clearly *another subject*, though introduced on the occasion of the children being brought to him. Jesus chose that such an occasion should not pass without profit to his disciples, whom he doubtless saw to be in special need of the instruction then given them.

There is also a general consideration which has been already mentioned, and which should not be overlooked in the interpretation of the text Matt. 19: 13, 14, and which is of special use in the interpretation of many a doubtful passage in the gospels and the epistles, namely, *that it was addressed to Jews*. We have already considered what influence this circumstance must have had on the manner in which the apostles would understand the commission they received to proselyte and baptize. Why should we suppose it had less influence here? The Jews were accustomed to a dispensation, under which the children of God's people were considered and treated, as belonging to their sacred community, and as entitled to inherit its blessings. Their Scriptures plainly required that they should be treated in this manner. But on the particular occasion now referred to, the disciples seem to have forgotten this principle. They treated the little children who were brought to Christ, as though it had escaped their recollection, that children were the objects of God's favor, and that they sustained so high a relation to the society of his people. Had there not been something faulty in the feelings of the disciples, they would not have done such a thing, as to forbid the

children to be brought to Christ for his blessing; and most certainly they would not have incurred his rebuke. The answer of Christ was perfectly suited to correct their mistake, and to teach them what, as the posterity of Abraham, they would easily understand; namely; *that children were to have the same relation to God and his people under the Christian dispensation, as before.* For I cannot but insist upon it, that, as the disciples in that case were chargeable with overlooking the importance of little children, at least, with not manifesting a suitable regard for them; it is perfectly natural to understand what Christ said in reply, as having been intended to correct their mistake, and to show in what light children were to be regarded under his reign.

The sense I have given to the passage in Matt. 19: 14, may receive further support from what Paul says respecting children, 1 Cor. 7: 14; "Else were your children *unclean*, but now they are *holy*." This text will be considered more particularly in the next Lecture. At present my object is simply to show, that, being understood according to very respectable and judicious commentators, it has an exact correspondence with my interpretation of the text Matt. 19: 14.

"Else were your children unclean, but now they are holy;" *νῦν δὲ ἁγιά ἐστιν.* According to Schleusner, this means, *but now are they held as members of the Christian church;* "Jam vero habentur membra ecclesiae Christianae." At the head of the article under which this text is quoted, he says, *He is called holy, who is to be numbered with the society of Christians.* Wahl, referring to this place, says, *it is spoken of one who is in any way connected with Christians, and therefore to be reckoned among them.* According to these and other distinguished authors, the Apostle Paul, who so perfectly understood the nature and circumstances of the Christian dispensation, represented children *as those who were to be numbered with the society of Christians, and to be regarded as holding an important relation to the Christian church,* even when only one of their parents was a believer. This must have involved the general principle, that the children of believers were considered as belonging to the Messiah's kingdom, or the

Christian church. And this is the same thing as that which I have understood to be taught by the words of Christ: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The declaration of Christ, and that of the Apostle, had relation to the same subject. They were both intended to show in what light the children of believers were to be regarded. This comparison of the two texts affords additional satisfaction as to the true meaning of each.

I have thus gone through with an examination of the passage in Matt. 19: 14, and, without relying on the opinions of others, have carefully attended to those considerations on both sides, which appeared to be of particular consequence to a right interpretation. But I would not suffer myself to feel any undue confidence in my own opinion on such a subject as this; and I would certainly treat with great respect those who adopt a different opinion. Having endeavored impartially to exhibit whatever appertains to a fair discussion of the subject, I very cheerfully refer the whole to the judgment of enlightened and candid men.

Respectable authors are divided. According to Rosenmüller and Kuinoel, Christ taught merely that his disciples must resemble little children in humility and gentleness, and not that children themselves belonged to his kingdom. But many English writers defend with various arguments the sense which I have given. Storr and Flatt are on the same side. And they do not merely give their *opinion*, although that would be entitled to great respect; but what is better, they give a *reason* for their opinion; and that reason is the very one, to which I have attached the highest importance in the preceding discussion. The passage relating to this text is the following.* "*Τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν;* for of such is the kingdom of heaven. *Children must have been included in the word, such;* because the proposition that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who have as little pride as children, would be no reason why *children* should not be prevented from coming to Jesus."

Now for the application of this passage, thus interpreted, to the subject in hand. No one pretends that the children spoken of in

* See Storr's Bib. Theol. Book 3. § 68.

this passage, were brought to Christ for baptism, or that the passage affords direct proof of our doctrine. Still it has an important bearing on the subject. Our inquiry is, in what way the apostles must have understood the commission which Christ gave them, to *proselyte* and *baptize* all nations; particularly, whether they would understand *the children* of proselytes to be included. After attending to various circumstances directly pertaining to the subject, and finding what reason we have to think, that the apostles must have understood the commission to baptize as extending to the children of believers; we proceeded to inquire, whether Christ, the Author of the new dispensation, had previously given any instructions, which could have an influence on their minds in regard to this subject; particularly whether he had said anything to show in what light he regarded little children. We fixed on the passage in Matt. 19: 14, as answering this inquiry; that is, as showing that the children of God's people were considered as belonging to their community, just as they had belonged to the community of his people under the former dispensation. Formerly, they were considered a *holy seed*, *consecrated to God*, and blessed with special privileges, in consequence of being the children of his people. Christ here seems to teach, that they were to be considered in the same light, and treated in the same manner, under his reign. When therefore the apostles received a commission to proselyte and baptize all nations, they had this special reason for understanding it as extending to children, that Christ himself had taught them before, that children were to belong to *his* kingdom, just as they had belonged to the society of God's people under the former economy. And if, wherever the Christian religion should be propagated and the kingdom of Christ established, the children of believers were, according to his instructions, to enjoy, in an important sense, the privileges of that kingdom, and to be connected with the society of the disciples; there could be no doubt that they were to receive the *mark* of discipleship. If they were to be regarded as *holy*, that is, *consecrated to God;* they were undoubtedly to receive the *sign* of consecration.

I close this Lecture with a passage from Knapp's Theology, under the head of Infant Baptism; where he shows that he gave the same sense to the text in Matt. 19: 14, and reasoned from it in the same manner as I have done.

"That Infant Baptism, considered as a solemn rite of consecration, cannot be opposed to the design and will of Christ, may be concluded from his own declaration, Matt. 19: 14. Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; *τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστίν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ; for of such is the kingdom of God.* This is indeed no command for Infant Baptism. But if children can and should have a share in the Christian church and in all Christian privileges, (*βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ,*) it cannot be improper to introduce them into the Christian church by this solemn rite of initiation. And if, according to the design of Christ, children, from their earliest youth up, are to have a share in the rights and privileges of Christians; it must also be agreeable to his will, solemnly to introduce them, by this rite of consecration, into the nursery of his disciples. Compare 1 Cor. 7: 14."

LECTURE CXIV.

INFANT BAPTISM.

We have already inquired, whether there was anything in the particular instructions of Christ to his apostles, previous to the final commission he gave them, which would naturally lead them to understand that commission, as intended to include infant children. We shall now inquire, whether we can be assisted in determining how they understood that commission, by *anything in their conduct while executing their commission, or any declaration made in their writings.*

The mode of reasoning which I have adopted, does not require, and does not lead us to expect a *direct, positive declaration*, that they baptized infants, or considered them proper subjects of baptism. For if the apostles and first Christians had a persuasion, that children were to hold a place in the community of God's people under the new dispensation, similar to what they had held before, and that they were to receive the new mark of special relation to God, as they had received the old; then there was no more occasion for the apostles expressly to mention the fact that children were *baptized*, than there was for Joshua, and Samuel, and all the writers of the history contained in the Old Testament, to mention at every period, that children eight days old were *circumcised.* And the case might be exactly so at the present time. Ministers or missionaries who hold to Infant Baptism, might write a history of their ministry, and the success attending it, for many years, without any mention of the baptism

of children. But we should consider such an omission as this, to be no proof that children were not baptized. For it would be obvious, that such ministers might be in circumstances, which would render it unnecessary for them to make any express mention of Infant Baptism. It might be that no one acquainted with them could have the least doubt respecting their practice. At the present day, indeed, when Christians every where are divided on this subject, such silence might not be what we should look for. But were all Christians united in the practice of Infant Baptism, as we apprehend the primitive Christians were, there might be no occasion whatever to make particular mention of it. In all such cases, we should understand the practice of ministers to be according to what we knew of their opinions. If they believed in Infant Baptism, we should have no doubt of their being in the practice of baptizing children, although in a brief account of their ministry, they should say nothing about such a practice.

The evidence, to which I now invite your attention, is incidental or circumstantial; but it is not on that account less worthy of consideration. It is obvious, that an undesigned reference or allusion to the practice of Infant Baptism, or the declaration of some principle or fact implying it, may afford evidence as satisfactory, as a direct assertion of the apostles.

After these introductory remarks, let us proceed to the subject above stated. My position is, that there are passages in the Acts of the apostles, and in the epistles, which fairly imply that the apostles baptized children, and that they understood their commission to baptize, as extending to children; and that these passages have a more natural and consistent sense on the supposition that Infant Baptism was the apostolic practice, than on the contrary supposition. I shall first refer to the passages which speak of the baptism of *households* or *families*. It is said of Lydia, Acts 16; 14, 15, that the Lord opened her heart to attend to the instructions of Paul, and that she was baptized and her *household*. And in the same chapter, v. 33, we are told that the jailer was baptized, he and *all his*, that is, *all who belonged to him*, *straightway*, or immediately. And Paul says, 1 Cor. 1: 16, "I baptized the *household* of Stephanas."

The reasoning from such passages is this. The word *οἰκία*, rendered *house* or *household*, had been commonly used to comprise children with their parents, much in the same manner as the word family or household is used now. And it is well known, that it had been the manner of the people of God, to consider and treat their families, as consecrated to God, and intimately associated with them in the concerns of religion. As therefore the apostles, who were accustomed to the language of the Old Testament, and to the practice there enjoined, speak familiarly of their baptizing *households*, or *families;* it is no more than reasonable to suppose, that those families generally contained children, and that those children were baptized. And if this was the case, the apostles must have understood their commission as including children. It will be observed, that whenever the apostles speak of baptizing households, they speak of it without any restriction. Now is this a circumstance which is familiarly mentioned in histories, written by those ministers who do not baptize infants? For them to speak freely and without qualification, of baptizing *families*, would be inconsistent with their practice. As to the instances mentioned in the New Testament of the baptism of families, — who has any right to say, that none of those families contained any but *adults*, — and adult *believers?* Who can think this in any degree probable?

To show more clearly what is the natural import of the account given in the New Testament of *family baptisms*, suppose the following case. Two missionaries have for a number of years been successfully laboring for the conversion of an Indian tribe in the wilderness of America. We have heard of their labors, and of their success, and have rejoiced in it, but have never learned, and have never to this day inquired, whether they practised Infant Baptism, or not. For special reasons, this now becomes a subject of inquiry; and the only means of information which we have at hand, is a brief history which those missionaries have published of their labors. In that history, they speak of several instances in which individuals embraced Christianity and received baptism. They inform us, that at such a time they baptized one of the chiefs, and his *family;* and that, at another time, they baptized

such a man, and *all his;* and again, another man, and his *household.* This is all the information they give. They mention, without explanation, the baptism of several persons, and their *households*, and so make *family-baptisms* a noticeable circumstance in the history of their mission. Would not such a circumstance lead us to think that they practised Infant Baptism? Be sure, it might be said, that they do not expressly mention the baptism of the little children, and that all who belonged to those families may have been *adults*, and adult *believers.* This, I admit, would be possible. But would it be *probable?* Would those, who do not baptize children, be likely to speak in this manner? Should we not think it very singular, to find accounts of *family-baptisms* in a history of Baptist Missions?

I do not offer the circumstance under consideration, as a decisive argument. But does not the account, which the apostles give of the baptism of *households*, perfectly agree with the supposition, that they were in the practice of baptizing children? If we admit that they understood children to be proper subjects of baptism, as they had before been of circumcision; would not such an account be just what we would expect? But would it be so, if we should not admit this?

If any one should ask whether the families referred to might not contain *servants*, as well as children; and whether we are to suppose that such servants were baptized, as the servants of Abraham were circumcised;— my answer would be, that, for ought we know, there might be servants, and that if the servants stood in as near a relation to their Christian masters, and were to be as much under their pious instruction and guidance, as the servants of Abraham where under his, I see no reason why they should not have been consecrated to God by baptism.

I have already referred to 1 Cor. 7: 14, as affording collateral support to the construction which was given to Matt. 19: 14. I propose now to give this text a more particular examination.

There are two interpretations of the text, which deserve special notice. The first that I shall mention is that of Dr. Gill, a very distinguished Baptist writer, who expresses what he understands to be the meaning of the text in the following paraphrase. *The*

unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. The parties spoken of "are duly, rightly, and legally *espoused* to each other; — otherwise, that is, if they are not truly married to each other, the children must be *spurious*, and not legitimate. *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy;* that is, if the marriage contracted between them was not valid, and if since the conversion of one of them, it can never be thought to be good; then the children begotten and born, either when both were infidels, or since one of them was converted, must be unlawfully begotten, baseborn, and not a genuine, legitimate offspring; but as the parents are lawfully married, the children born of them are in a civil and legal sense holy, that is, legitimate."

The most powerful argument which has been urged in favor of this interpretation, and one attended with much plausibility is, that it seems, at first view, to agree with the object of the Apostle, who directs that a believer should not put away an unbelieving partner, and who asserts as Dr. Gill understands him, that the believing and unbelieving partners are lawfully joined in marriage; and that, were it not so, their children would be illegitimate; but that, in consequence of the lawfulness of the connection between the parents, their children are legitimate.

I remark in reply to this, that a different sense will agree, to say the least, equally well with the manifest object of the Apostle. The very direction, that an unbelieving husband or wife should not be put away by the other party, implies, that there is a matrimonial connection between them, and that the connection is lawful. But the Apostle not only gives this direction, but enforces it by a proper reason, and the reason he suggests, as I understand it, is this; that the unbelieving husband or wife is sanctified by the believing partner in such a sense, that, in consequence of it, their children are *separated from heathenism, consecrated to God, and brought into the society of Christians.* This was then, and would be now, a consideration of great weight, — much greater, I should think, than the *mere legitimacy* of the children. This consideration did indeed presuppose their legitimacy; but it had this

important point in addition, namely, that *the children were a holy seed, consecrated to God, and entitled to the special privileges of the Christian dispensation.* Now this consideration, as it *includes* the other, and has so much in addition, must be a more powerful reason to enforce the observance of the direction, than the other taken by itself. So that, in respect to the design of the Apostle, and the reasoning employed, Dr. Gill's interpretation has certainly no advantage over the other.

But there are considerations of great weight against Dr. Gill's construction.

1. It is contrary to the *usus loquendi.* It puts a sense upon the words ἡγίασται and ἅγια, which is widely different from the prevailing sense; yea, different from the sense which they have in any other passages of Scripture. And Dr. Gill himself does not pretend that either of the words is used in the sense he contends for, in any other text. He does indeed attempt to support his rendering by referring to the use of the Hebrew קִדֵּשׁ in the Talmudic books, where it has the sense of *espousing* merely. But Schleusner objects to the argument, and says, "that the notion of *espousing*, which certain interpreters have attributed to the word τὸ ἁγιαζεῖν from the use of the word קִדֵּשׁ in the Talmudic books, is, as any one must see, manifestly foreign to this place." There is not one of the senses of קָדַשׁ, given by Gesenius, and not one of the many senses of ἁγιάζω, given by Schleusner and Wahl, which favors the rendering of Dr. Gill. The same is true of the adjective ἅγια. Schleusner and Wahl give a great variety of senses, but none of them relate to the *legitimacy of children.* Nor is ἀκάθαρτος, nor the corresponding Hebrew word, ever used to designate a spurious or illegitimate offspring. Good use, then, is entirely against the rendering of Dr. Gill.

2. Although the advocates of Dr. Gill's interpretation of the text say much of its perfect correspondence with the object and the reasoning of the Apostle; I think the reasoning, or the train of thought, in one important respect, though not mentioned by any writer whom I have consulted, is clearly inconsistent with that interpretation. The Apostle says, "*Otherwise*," that is, were it not

as I have said, that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife by the husband; "your children would be *unclean*, but now are they *holy*." The children are holy, in the sense intended, in consequence of the influence which the believing wife has upon the unbelieving husband, or the believing husband upon the unbelieving wife. He is *sanctified* by her, and she by him; and *in consequence of this sanctification*, whatever it is, the children are *holy*. Without this sanctification of the unbelieving party by the believing, the children would be *unclean*. Suppose now husband and wife are *both unbelievers*. The sanctification spoken of, whatever it is, does not exist; of course, the reason or cause of the holiness of the children does not exist. And if the *cause* of their holiness does not exist, they cannot *be holy;* they are *unclean*. But are they *illegitimate?* May there not be lawful marriage between a husband and wife who are *both unbelievers?* Is it necessary to the *lawfulness of marriage* and to the *legitimacy of children*, that the husband or the wife should have Christian faith? How was it with those who were married and had children while they were *heathen?* Were their children *bastards?* Were they ever considered and treated so by the apostles? They certainly would have been considered so, had not their parents been lawfully married. But if lawful marriage may exist, where neither husband nor wife is a Christian; they may surely have *legitimate children*. But they cannot have children who are *holy*, *in the sense of the Apostle;* because being holy in that sense is evidently the consequence of an unbelieving father being sanctified by a believing mother, or an unbelieving mother by a believing father. Or the argument may be stated thus: If both parents are unbelievers, — if they are *pagans*, most surely their children cannot be considered a *holy seed*, in the sense of the Old Testament or the New. They are ἀκάθαρτα, *unclean*, *heathen*. But are they *illegitimate?* If not, — if those who are joined in marriage, though both of them are unbelievers and pagans, may have *legitimate children;* then clearly the faith of one of the parents and the sanctification of the other by means of that faith, cannot be necessary in order to the legitimacy of the children. But it *is*

necessary in order to their being *holy* in the sense of the Apostle; for he says expressly, that were it not for such a sanctification of one parent by the other, the children would be *unclean*, which is the opposite of being *holy*. Thus it becomes manifest that ἅγια and ἀκάθαρτα cannot be rendered *legitimate* and *illegitimate*, without involving us in inextricable difficulty as to the Apostle's reasoning. But this difficulty is avoided by another interpretation, as we shall see in the sequel.

There is no occasion to dwell upon the opinion of those, who consider the Apostle as speaking of the real conversion of an unbelieving by a believing partner, or of the prospect of such conversion. For although this opinion may seem to derive some support from v. 16, it does not agree with the statement of the case.

The other sense of the text, which I shall now particularly consider, is this: The unbelieving husband, by his voluntary connection with a believing wife, is, in a manner, separated from the heathen, and brought into an alliance with Christians. His being "*pleased to dwell with*" such a wife shows, that he is not an outrageous infidel, but that he has some sober reflection, and is willing to be in Christian society. He stands in that relation to his wife in which, as Scripture teaches, he becomes *one* with her. On account of this near relation, he is to be regarded and treated very differently from what he would be, if no such relation existed. He has been and is so sanctified, ἡγίασται, — his condition relatively is so affected by his marriage with her, that her living with him will be attended with no guilt, and will deprive her of no privileges. She has therefore no occasion to put him away, but may as lawfully and properly continue to dwell with him, as if he were a Christian. Were it not for this; that is; were it not that his state relatively is thus affected by his connection with her; in other words, were he, in all respects, to be reckoned among the unsanctified heathen; were he openly and entirely united to their society; were his wife's piety and her relation to him a matter of no consideration, and were he to be regarded just as he would be, if he had no connection at all with God's people; then indeed his children would be

unclean. Their relation to such a father, if he had not a matrimonial connection with a pious wife, would render them *heathen* children, and would exclude them from the peculiar privileges of the children of God's people. But now, as his condition is so altered by his matrimonial connection with a believing wife; as he is by that connection so *sanctified*, that he and his wife stand well in respect to their domestic state; his children are not to be regarded as *heathen* children, but as a *holy seed*, a *Christian offspring*, entitled to the privileges of a special relation to the Christian Church, and the privileges of a Christian education. In other words; the people of God are not to treat them as *unclean*, — are not to separate them from their society; but are to *receive* them, to *adhere* to them, and to train them up for the service of Christ.

But there is another argument in favor of this interpretation, namely, *common usage*, the sense generally attached in other parts of Scripture to the principal words on which the interpretation must depend; and especially the sense which these words have, when applied to the same subjects. It should never be forgotten, that the Apostle Paul, who wrote the book containing the text under consideration, was by birth and education a *Hebrew;* that he was perfectly familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and that in a very remarkable degree he transfused the peculiarities of those Scriptures into his own writings. He adopted the phraseology of the Hebrew Scriptures. He wrote in their idiom. Accordingly it will be of the first importance to notice the peculiar Hebrew sense of the principal words found in the passage before us.

Ἀκάθαρτος, according to Schleusner, signifies, *that which is prohibited by the Mosaic law, or that from which the people of God were required to separate themselves.* Referring to Acts 14: 28, he says: "A man is here called *ἀκάθαρτος*, *unclean*, with whom the Jews thought it unlawful to have any familiar intercourse." He represents it as often used to denote *a pagan, an alien from the worship of the true God, or one who does not belong to the people of God, or to the society of Christians.* The text under consideration he renders thus: "Alioquin et liberi vestri remoti essent a societate Christianorum;" *Otherwise your children also*

would be removed from the society of Christians. He quotes the passage in 2 Cor. 6: 17, as exhibiting the same sense of the word: Ἀκάθαρτος μὴ ἅπτεσθε; touch not the *unclean thing;* i. e. as the connection shows, *have no intercourse with pagans.* Wahl agrees with Schleusner: "If it were otherwise, it would follow that your children also were not to be considered as belonging to the Christian community." Lightfoot is of the same opinion. He says: "That the words ἀκάθαρτα and ἅγια refer *not to legitimacy or illegitimacy*, but to the *gentile* or *Christian state;* that the children of the gentiles, or pagans, were by the Jews considered as ἀκάθαρτα, *unclean*, and the children of Jews, ἅγια, *holy*, and that in the passage under consideration, the Apostle refers to this well known sense of the word; that his treatment of the subject does not turn on this hinge, whether a child, born of parents, one of whom was a Christian and the other a heathen, was a *legitimate* offspring, but whether he was a *Christian* offspring." Whitby presents the argument still more fully. "The Apostle does not say, else were your children *bastards*, but now are they *legitimate;* but else were they *unclean*, i. e. *heathen* children, not to be owned as a *holy seed*, and therefore not to be admitted into covenant with God as belonging to his people. That this is the true import of the words ἀκάθαρτα and ἅγια, will be apparent from the Scriptures, in which the heathen are styled the *unclean*, in opposition to the Jews in covenant with God, and therefore styled a *holy people.* The Jews looked upon all *heathens* and their *offspring*, as *unclean*, by reason of their want of circumcision, the sign of the covenant. Hence, whereas it is said that Joshua circumcised the people, the Septuagint say, περιεκάθαρεν, he *cleansed* them. To this sense of the words *unclean* and *holy*, the Apostle may here most rationally be supposed to allude, declaring that the seed of *holy* persons, as Christians are called, are also *holy.* And though one of the parents be still a heathen, yet is the denomination to be taken from the better, and so their offspring are to be esteemed not as heathens, i. e. *unclean*, but *holy*, as all Christians by denomination are. So Clemens Alexandrinus infers, saying; 'I suppose the seed of those that are *holy*, is *holy*, according to that saying

of the Apostle Paul, the wife is sanctified by the husband, etc." Whitby confutes the other rendering, 'Else were your children bastards,' by saying; "The word used for *bastard* by the Apostle being *νόθος*, Heb. 12: 8, and the word *γνήσιος* being the proper word for a *legitimate* offspring; had the Apostle intended such a sense, he would have used the words, which in the Greek writers are generally used in that sense, and not such words as in the Septuagint and in the Jewish writers always have a relation to *federal* holiness, or the want of it."

The authors to whom I have referred, and other writers of the highest character as philologists and commentators, are all of one mind as to the sense of the phrase, "now are they holy." *Now are they to be considered as belonging to the Christian community.* God's people are not to separate from them as *heathen* children, but to treat them as *Christian* children. Wahl says, "it is spoken of one who is in any way connected with Christians, and therefore to be reckoned among them." So also Calvin. "The children of the Jews, because they were made heirs of the covenant, and distinguished from the children of the impious, were called a *holy seed.* And for the same reason, the children of Christians, even when only one of the parents is pious, are accounted holy, and according to the testimony of the Apostle, *differ from the impure seed of idolaters.* Doederlein and Knapp allude to this text as having the same sense. Against supposing that the Apostle meant to assert the legitimacy of children, Doddridge urges, that "this is an unscriptural sense of the word, and that the argument will by no means bear it."

The interpretation I have given of the text agrees very nearly with what is expressed in the following quotation from Flatt's commentary. He says; "*ἡγίασται* may be rendered thus: he is made *ἅγιος* in a *certain respect.* Inasmuch as he lived in society with a Christian wife, he is, in a measure, *separated* from Jews and heathen, and stands in connection with the Christian community." In consequence of which, his children, who would otherwise be considered as having no connection with the people of God, will be *Christian* children.

It may perhaps be said by way of objection to this rendering, that ἡγίασται must have the same general sense with ἅγια; and that if ἅγια, *holy*, implies that the children, to whom it was applied, were consecrated to God, and were entitled to special privileges; then ἡγίασται, *is sanctified*, must imply, that the unbelieving husband or wife was in like manner consecrated to God, and was entitled to the same special privileges.

But to this it may be replied, that it is nothing uncommon for the same word to have a variety of significations, not only in different sentences, but in the same sentence. Instances of this might easily be pointed out in the Scriptures, and in other writings. In all such cases, the obvious nature and circumstances of the subject to which the word is applied, must help us to determine in what particular sense it is used. Any one who will consult an English or Latin Dictionary, or a Greek Lexicon, may see how different subjects, and the different circumstances of the same subject, constantly vary the signification of the same word, sometimes in small and almost imperceptible degrees, and sometimes in higher degrees. And if the sense of the *same word* thus varies; surely it can be nothing strange that these two words, one a verb, and the other an adjective, should vary a little in their signification, when applied to subjects so different, as those now referred to. So that our giving somewhat of a different sense to ἡγίασται is *sanctified* from what we give to ἅγια, are *holy*, is no valid objection to our interpretation of the text.

After all, it will be seen that, according to the interpretation I have given, the two words, though the one is a verb and the other an adjective, have the *same general sense*, i. e. the sense of being *separated*, *set apart*, or *made fit for a particular use;* and that the difference arises from the obvious difference of the subjects. The general notion of being *sanctified* is first applied to an unconverted heathen, connected in marriage with a Christian; and it is applied in reference to a particular question, that is, whether it is proper and advisable, that a Christian should continue to live with an unbelieving partner. Now when the Apostle says, in reference to this question, "the unbelieving husband is *sanctified* by the

wife," it is natural to understand him to speak of a *sanctification* adapted to the subject under consideration. And a sanctification adapted to that subject would seem to be this; that by his connection in marriage with a believing wife, he is, in some sort, separated from the society of the heathen, certainly from the familiar intercourse with them which he once had; that, on account of the pious woman with whom he is so closely connected, he is to be regarded in a light different from that, in which he would be regarded, if he were altogether a pagan, and had no such relation to a Christian partner; and that, by the effect which her faith produces upon him, he is brought into such a state, that she may with propriety continue to live with him. Their intercourse comes under a sanctifying influence, *by means of her piety*. This interpretation, it is evident, gives the same general sense to ἡγίασται as to ἅγια, the last being applied to children, and denoting that they, by their very birth, are separated from paganism, and brought into the nursery of the Christian church, where they are to be consecrated to God, and trained up for his service.

It will cast a still clearer light on the meaning of the text, to inquire what was the occasion of the doubt which arose in the minds of the Corinthian converts, and rendered the advice of the Apostle necessary. This doubt unquestionably arose, not in consequence of anything in the original institution of marriage, but in consequence of the special law which God gave to the Israelites, forbidding them to contract marriages with any of the idolatrous people around them; a law which was intended, like many others, to preserve them a *holy nation, separate from the rest of the world*, till the coming of Christ. The doubt might be occasioned more directly by the instances, in which such prohibited marriages had been dissolved by divine direction, particularly in the time of Ezra. The people of God had formed marriages with the daughters of the surrounding nations; so that as it was said, *the holy seed* i. e. the Jews, *had mingled themselves with those idolatrous people*. After a time, those who had thus offended, were brought to consider the evil of what they had done; and they made a covenant with God *to put away all the wives, and such as were born of him*,

according to the divine command. See Ezra, Chap. ix. and x. Now the Apostle, considering that the economy of the former dispensation was changed and that a new precept was called for, virtually told the Corinthian Christians, that that ancient national law respecting marriage was not binding upon *them*, any more than the law of circumcision; that those believers who were lawfully married to unbelievers had no occasion to dissolve the marriage bond. And he suggested to them one consideration of great weight; namely; that if according to the Mosaic law, and the example of the people in the time of Ezra, they were to put away their unbelieving *partners*, and so treat them as *pagans*, *ἀκάθαρτα*, *unclean;* they must consider their *children* also as *unclean*, i. e. *heathen* children, and put them away likewise, as the people did in the case referred to. In opposition to this, the Apostle appeals to a fact which was well known; namely; that the offspring of such marriages were considered, as they are now, to be a *holy seed*, *ἅγια*, just as if both parents were *believers*, and so were fit to be devoted to God, and to enjoy special privileges in the society of his people.

It will be seen that, in this examination of the passage before us, my chief reliance is upon well known usage as to the word *ἅγιος*, and its corresponding Hebrew קָדֹשׁ among the Jews, especially when applied to Israelites, whether men or children, by way of distinction from other nations.

I have only one more remark. Those who hold to Infant Baptism, believe that the Children of Christians, even those children who had only one believing parent, were, in the Apostle's time, and in the Corinthian church, actually devoted to God in baptism, and so brought into a peculiar relation to the Christian church. Now on this supposition, what can be more natural, than to suppose that the Apostle referred to this fact, when he said, the children spoken of were *ἅγια*, *holy*, i. e. *set apart*, *consecrated to God?*

The text, thus interpreted, presents a very satisfactory view of the subject under consideration, and shows how the apostles understood their commission. For we see, that wherever the Christian religion took effect, and men became believers, and formed themselves into a society, their children were considered as appertain-

ing to the same society, and *as set apart*, and *devoted* to God; just as they were under the former economy. And as they were thus considered to be ἅγια, a *holy seed, separated from paganism, and consecrated to God;* how can we reasonably doubt that they had the *sign* of consecration put upon them? Whitby states the argument from this text thus: "If the *holy seed* among the Jews were to be circumcised, and be made federally holy by receiving the sign of the covenant and being admitted into the number of God's people, because they were born in sanctity, or were seminally holy; *for the root being holy so are the branches;* then, by like reason, the *holy seed* of Christians ought to be admitted to baptism, the sign of the Christian covenant, and so to be entered into the society of the Christian church."

On the whole, my conclusion is, that although the word ἅγια does not properly mean *baptized*, it denotes that the children referred to were in such a condition, or were regarded as standing in such a relation to God and his people, that the appointed sign of consecration to God was of course to be applied to them. Or to express it differently; the word ἅγια does not by itself mean, and is not to be rendered, *subjects of baptism.* But it signifies that the children, to whom it was applied, were to be regarded as *Christian* children, *a holy seed*, separated from the heathen, consecrated to God, and to be received and treated as such by the Christian community. The word ἅγια, by itself, can signify no more than this. But if the children were thus regarded as a *holy, consecrated seed*, it is natural to conclude that they received the sign of this. And the supposition of their being devoted to God by baptism most satisfactorily accounts for the Apostle's calling them ἅγια, *holy*, or *consecrated children.*

LECTURE CXV.

INFANT BAPTISM. COLLATERAL EVIDENCE.

In order to give simplicity and unity to my reasoning on the subject of Infant Baptism, I have made it rest chiefly on the inquiry, how the apostles must have understood the commission they received from Christ, *to proselyte and baptize all nations*. I have considered the point at issue as relating to the just interpretation of Scripture. And as the passage which records the commission, does not explicitly inform us whether *infant children* were meant to be included or not; I have thought it indispensable to consider what there was in the circumstances of the apostles, as *native Jews*, especially in their usages respecting *children*, which would be likely to influence them in their understanding of such a commission from one, who was born and educated in the same community with them. I have thought it important also to inquire, whether there was anything in the previous instructions of Christ, or in the writings of the apostles afterwards, which could help to show in what light they regarded little children. And here we have found, that Christ, exactly in accordance with the principle which was established by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, represented little children, as entitled in a peculiar sense to the privileges of the gospel dispensation, and that the Apostle Paul represented it as a fact, generally known and acknowledged, that the children of believers were a *holy seed*, consecrated to God, and admitted to special privileges in the Christian community. And if this was the case, we have supposed

it would follow of course, that baptism, the sign of such consecration to God, and of such a relation to the Christian community, was administered to them. Every consideration of this kind will be strengthened, and every such probable conclusion confirmed, by the historical proof which will by and by be produced, that Infant Baptism was actually practised in the early Christian churches. This proof might indeed have been exhibited before any other consideration; and this method might have been attended with some important advantages. But it must be remembered, that, according to our belief, there were obvious considerations, which influenced the apostles and early Christians to practise Infant Baptism. Now what can be more natural than for us first of all to inquire, what those considerations were; and afterwards to present the evidence of the fact, that Infant Baptism was practised in the early Christian church? In this way we at length become fully satisfied, that the considerations which operated upon the minds of the apostles, did actually produce the effect which we have supposed. According to our views, *they* were the men who introduced the baptism of infants as a Christian ordinance; of course they could not have been influenced in their judgment as we are, by the consideration, that Infant Baptism was a practice already existing. *They* must have been influenced in another way. The method which I have chosen is, first, to inquire into the circumstances and usages of the apostles, as members of the Jewish community, and to satisfy ourselves, as far as may be, what were the considerations, which would naturally lead them to understand their commission to *proselyte* and *baptize*, as *including children;* next, to attend to anything recorded in the New Testament, which has an obvious correspondence with the supposition, that Infant Baptism was practised by the apostles; and finally to exhibit the proof, that baptism was in fact applied to children in the early Christian churches. This order appears best suited to present the whole subject in a clear light, and to make a just impression on the minds of Christians.

Before proceeding to the argument from Ecclesiastical History, I shall advert to three additional considerations as collateral proof.

First. *The manner in which the Apostle requires children to be educated.* In Ephesians 6: 4, Christian parents are required *to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* This is the general precept. Others more particular, but of the same import, might be cited. According to apostolic direction, the children of believers were, from their earliest years, to be instructed in the principles of the Christian religion. They were to have the doctrines and precepts, the invitations and promises, the warnings and threats of God's word, clearly set before them, and earnestly inculcated upon them. They were to be considered and treated as scholars, placed in the school of Christ, and there to be brought under the influence of faithful and pious instruction; so that, through the divine blessing, their minds might be enlightened, and their affections and actions conformed to the principles of Christianity. In a word, their education was to be conducted with a direct view to their being made followers of Christ, and active members of his spiritual kingdom. Now the precepts of the New Testament, requiring all this instruction and discipline of children, perfectly agree with the view we have taken of their state. If God is pleased to place our children in such a near relation to us, and if he requires us to consecrate them to him, and to put upon them the sign of consecration, the mark of discipleship, that is, the mark of their being placed, as young disciples or learners, in the school of Christ; it becomes perfectly suitable, that he should require us to treat them with all this affection and care, and so to endeavor to bring them up for God. And it is true not only that these precepts of the New Testament, pointing out the duty of parents, are perfectly *consistent* with the doctrine we maintain, but that they derive additional importance from this doctrine. If, according to divine appointment, we publicly dedicate our children to God by a solemn religious rite, and thus bring them into a special relation to the church of Christ, and secure to them a prospect of special blessings; we must surely feel, that we are under strong obligations to cherish a tender affection for them, and to labor, by all the methods of a wise Christian discipline, to make them what the privileges of their birth and the

commands of God require them to be. So the divine precept given by Moses, that parents should teach their children diligently the things of religion, laboring to inculcate them morning and evening, and all the hours of the day, became specially suitable, and acquired a special force, on account of their children having been publicly devoted to God, and marked as his, by circumcision.

These observations are not meant to imply, that those who do not devote their children to God by baptism, may not feel their obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; but that those, who practise Infant Baptism, will find themselves drawn to this duty by a *special* obligation, and will be likely to perceive with additional clearness, and to feel with additional force, the propriety and importance of giving them a religious education. Now the circumstance, that Infant Baptism, considered as a divine institution, has such an obvious and striking correspondence with those precepts which point out the duty of parents, and invests those precepts with new force, is a circumstance in favor of Infant Baptism. Whereas, if the contrary were fact; that is, if the doctrine of Infant Baptism were calculated to diminish in our view the importance of a religious education, or to render us less attentive to the duty; if, while holding to Infant Baptism, we felt a less powerful motive, than we otherwise should, to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; this certainly would be a consideration of no small weight against it. Because it is the manifest design of all the positive institutions of religion, to have an effect upon our minds in favor of its moral precepts, and to excite us to the performance of our duty.

The second consideration referred to is, *that the New Testament does not contain any express mention of Infant Baptism.* This circumstance has already been noticed in another connection. But I wish to dwell upon it more particularly here, as I think it must appear to be a circumstance in favor of our doctrine.

I can by no means admit, as I intimated in a previous Lecture, that the New Testament does not contain anything which fairly

implies Infant Baptism. Still it is evident that Infant Baptism is not introduced as a subject of *particular discussion* in the New Testament; that it is neither explicitly enjoined nor prohibited; and that neither the practice of baptizing children nor the absence of such a practice is expressly mentioned.

But this fact cannot be urged as an argument against Infant Baptism, because, as circumstances were, there was no occasion to enjoin it, and no occasion to discuss the subject, or even to name it. The circumstances referred to have already been brought to view. The Jews had always been accustomed to have their children consecrated to God by the same rite as was appointed originally for Abraham and his seed, and afterwards for all men from among the gentiles, who should become proselytes to the true religion. They had always been accustomed to see children treated as a *holy seed*, and members of the society of God's people. They had never heard the propriety of this questioned, and had never been acquainted with a contrary practice. In these circumstances, it was, I apprehend *a matter of course*, that they should understand the divine appointment of baptism for Christian proselytes, as including their *children*. And it being a matter of course that they should so understand the subject, there was not the least necessity that the baptism of children should be expressly required, or even mentioned.

To be perfectly satisfied on this subject, just look at the manner in which circumcision is spoken of, Acts 15: 1. Certain Judaizing Christians came from Judea to Antioch, and said to the brethren there, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Why did they not express all that they meant, and say, "Except ye and *your children* be circumcised, ye cannot be saved?" And afterwards, v. 10, when Peter spoke in opposition to the Judaizing Christians in regard to the same subject, and said, "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the *disciples*," — that is, *Why do ye require the disciples to be circumcised?* Why did he not in so many words object to laying this burdensome rite upon the disciples and their *children?* The answer to both questions is the same. There

was no *occasion* for the mention of children, because it was perfectly understood by all, that children were to be included with their parents. It had always been so. And who could need to be informed, that it was to be so still? The same I think must have been the case, when baptism was appointed, instead of circumcision, as the mark to be put upon the people of God. The apostles and Jewish Christians had always been accustomed to consider children, as united with their parents, as belonging to the same religious community, and as entitled to the same mark of consecration to God. They would understand that this practice of applying the sign of consecration to children, as well as parents, would be continued under the Christian dispensation, because the reasons for it continued, and because nothing was said or done by the Author of the new dispensation to show that there was to be any alteration in this respect. So that it cannot be regarded as anything strange, that children are not expressly mentioned in the command to baptize, or in the accounts of baptisms contained in the New Testament. Nor is it strange that no express declaration on this subject is found in the writings of the early Christian fathers; as there is no evidence that the practice had ever been objected to, or had ever occasioned any controversy. This silence of the Scriptures and of the early fathers respecting the *baptism* of children, is analogous to the fact, that the *circumcision* of children on the eighth day is scarcely mentioned for a thousand years before Christ. Now as we can satisfactorily account for the fact, that the New Testament contains no express mention of Infant Baptism, on the supposition that Infant Baptism was admitted and practised by all Christians, without any controversy; this fact cannot surely be considered as affording an argument against Infant Baptism.

But this is not all. The fact that there is no command *prohibiting* the practice of Infant Baptism, and that there are no such remarks as would naturally arise from the *absence* of the practice, is an important argument in favor of Infant Baptism. As it had always been the custom of God's people from the time of Abraham, to consecrate their children to God, to put upon them

the seal of the covenant, and to admit them as belonging to their holy community; if Christ had intended to make any alteration as to the manner in which they were to be regarded and treated, we should suppose that he would have mentioned such alteration; and that, when he commanded his apostles to proselyte and baptize all nations, he would have expressly informed them, that under the new dispensation children were not meant to be included.

But there is another view of greater consequence still. All the Jews, those who embraced Christianity, and those who rejected it, had always been accustomed to consider their children as *a holy seed, consecrated to God*, and to see them receive the seal of God's covenant. Now if Christianity had cut them off from this relation to God, and had deprived them of the sign of being consecrated to him, and had treated them as having no part or lot with God's people; can we think that such a change as this could have been made without occasioning animadversion? Can it be that neither the friends nor the enemies of Christ would have made any complaint? The unbelieving Jews, and even some who professed to believe, were ready enough to complain of innovation, and of everything in Christianity, which implied the surrender of what belonged to the Jewish religion. How earnestly, for instance, did they object to giving up circumcision, although baptism was introduced in its place, as a mark of discipleship? But in consequence of the ardent affection which, as men, especially as Israelites, they cherished for their offspring, they must have felt a much stronger objection to depriving them wholly of the privilege of being consecrated to God by any religious rite, and to excluding them wholly from that sacred relation which they had always sustained to the church of God, than to a change merely in the outward rite. But, with all their disposition to complain, what complaints did they ever make of Christ or the apostles, for treating children with less regard, than had been exercised towards them before? There is not the least appearance of there having ever been any complaint or any controversy on this subject in the time of Christ, or his apostles, or in the

period succeeding. Now I cannot but regard this as unaccountable, on the supposition that baptism, the initiatory sign appointed by Christ for his disciples, had been withheld from their children. Of all the subjects of complaint, this must have been first among those Jews who rejected Christianity, and even among those who embraced it. And as there is no trace of any such complaint, and no command or intimation respecting children which could have occasioned such a complaint; in a word, as there is silence among the writers of the New Testament, and among the early fathers, respecting any change in the standing or privileges of children; we must conclude that no change took place, and that they were in substance regarded and treated by the teachers of Christianity, as they had been by the people of God before.

The third consideration referred to is, that *Infant Baptism, when apprehended correctly, must be agreeable to the best feelings of pious parents respecting their infant offspring.* This is not produced as an independent argument. But after having attended to the principal reasons which support the doctrine of Infant Baptism, it must be a gratification to find, that the doctrine corresponds with our purest and best affections. It would, on the contrary, be a serious difficulty in our way, and would lead us to question the soundness of our arguments, if the most tender and pious dispositions of our hearts were found in array against the practice for which we plead. The laws and institutions of religion are all intended to exercise and improve our benevolent and pious affections. And when we perceive in them an obvious fitness to do this, we cannot but consider it an argument in their favor. How common is it, for example, to illustrate and enforce the obligation of men to pray, and to attend on the Lord's Supper, from the consideration, that these duties perfectly agree with our most devout feelings, and are suited to improve them. Indeed how often do we satisfy ourselves that it is our duty to perform certain things, not expressly enjoined by the word of God, because we are drawn to them by those affections which we consider to be right. But if we find that any practice

stands in opposition not only to our natural affections, but to the feelings of benevolence; we are disinclined to believe that it could ever have been appointed by God. Come then to the subject now before us. And what pious parent, rightly apprehending the nature and design of Infant Baptism, would not acknowledge it to be a benevolent appointment of God? Who would not be gratified to find such a doctrine, as that of Infant Baptism, true? Who would not deem it a privilege to be permitted to perform such a duty? And who would not regard it as a subject of heartfelt grief, to be deprived of such a privilege? It must surely be the wish of pious parents to give up their children to God; and to do this in the temple of God, where the prayers of many will ascend with their own to the Lord of heaven and earth, in behalf of their children. Publicly to apply to them a sacred rite which marks them for God; which signifies that they are placed in the school of Christ, and in the nursery of the church; that they are to enjoy faithful parental instruction, the preaching of the gospel, and the affections and prayers of Christians, and that they are to come under the influence of a divine economy, fraught with the most gracious promises, and the most precious blessings; — to apply to children a sacred rite of such import, must be inexpressibly delightful to godly parents. If then such parents give up Infant Baptism, they give up a privilege, which I should think they would regard as of more value to their children, than all the riches of the world. Now I cannot but deplore a mistake, which leads parents to act against those sincere and devout affections, which God requires them to cherish, and which religion, with all its observances, is designed to improve. Pious parents, I repeat it, who rightly apprehend the doctrine of Infant Baptism, cannot but wish it true. And it would seem to me that their first inquiry must be, whether they may be *permitted* thus to devote their dear offspring to God, and to apply to them the seal of his gracious covenant. If nothing is found to *forbid* their doing this; especially, if they have reason, from the word and providence of God, to believe that he would approve it; I should

suppose they would embrace such a privilege with the sincerest gratitude and joy, and hasten to confer such a blessing upon their children. That it is a privilege and a blessing will be made still more evident, by the remarks I shall offer in another place on the utility of Infant Baptism.

LECTURE CXVI.

INFANT BAPTISM PROVED FROM ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

I NOW proceed to the argument in favor of Infant Baptism from *Ecclesiastical History.*

The testimony of Ecclesiastical History on this subject is just such as we should expect, on the supposition that Infant Baptism was, from the beginning, universally regarded as a Christian institution. The earliest Christian fathers had little or no occasion to enter on a particular discussion of the subject, or even to make any express mention of it. Accordingly we find in the writers, who next succeeded the apostles, only allusions to Infant Baptism. These allusions, however, are of such a nature, that they cannot well be accounted for without supposing that Infant Baptism was *the uniform practice.* But the fathers, who wrote in the following ages, were more and more particular and explicit in their testimony.

My intention is only to make citations sufficient to show the nature of the argument; referring you to Wall's History of Infant Baptism, and other works, where the subject is treated at full length.

A citation has commonly been made from the apology of Justin Martyr, written about the middle of the second century. Among those who were members of the church, he says, there were many of both sexes, some sixty, and some seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ, ἐκ παίδων, *from their infancy* or *childhood.* The word he uses is the same as was used in the

final commission given to the apostles to go and proselyte and baptize all nations; ἐμαθητεύθησαν, *they were proselyted*, or *made disciples*. It is, I think, altogether probable and beyond any reasonable doubt, that Justin meant in this place to speak of those who were made disciples, or introduced into the school of Christ by *baptism*, when they were infants.

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, was born near the close of the first century. He says; "Christ came to save all persons, who by him are born again unto God, (renascuntur in Deum, *infants* and *little ones*, and children, and youths, and elder persons)." Wall and Schroeckh, and other writers of the first ability, consider the word, *renasci*, in the writings of Irenæus and Justin, as signifying *baptism*. "Any man," says Wall, "who has been at all conversant in the fathers, — will be satisfied that they as constantly meant *baptized*, by the word *regenerated* or *born again*, as we mean the same by the word *Christened*." In this argument we are not concerned at all with the opinions entertained by Irenæus as to the *efficacy* of baptism. Our only inquiry is, whether it appears from his writings, that Infant Baptism was the *prevailing practice*. The passage above cited is with good reason supposed to contain proof of this.

The testimony of Tertullian must be considered with special care. He wrote about a hundred years after the apostles, and was in many respects a Stoic, rather than a Christian. But the strange opinions which he entertained, as a Montanist, have nothing to do with his testimony as to *facts;* especially as to facts which he does not cite in support of his peculiar opinions; and most of all as to facts against which he objects, and which he attacks with severity. In regard to such facts, his testimony is entitled to full credit. For what motive could he possibly have to assert things, which stood in the way of his own sectarian views, unless those things actually existed? Would any author, especially one who wished to set himself up as the head of a sect, speak of the existence of a practice which he disapproved, and which was directly opposed to his favorite scheme, when at the same time he was aware that no such practice existed? It is futile to say, that Ter-

tullian was an enthusiast. Was he an enthusiast in favor of Infant Baptism? And were the facts to which he alludes, of such a nature, that speaking of them as he did could in any way tend to justify him in his enthusiastic notions? Could he have had any motive whatever to treat Infant Baptism as he did, unless he, and those for whom he wrote, knew that it was a common practice?

The passage in Tertullian's treatise De Baptismo, chap. 18, is very important, though it is attended with difficulties, and has been a subject of no small controversy. The following is a translation.

"But they whose duty it is to administer baptism, should know, that it is not to be given rashly. '*Give to every one that asketh thee,*' has its proper subject, and relates to almsgiving. But *that* command is rather to be regarded; *Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine;* and, *Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins.* Therefore according to every person's condition and disposition, and age also, the delay of baptism is more profitable, especially as to little children. For why is it necessary that the sponsors should incur danger? For they may either fail of their promises by death, or may be disappointed by a child's proving to be of a wicked disposition. Our Lord says indeed, *forbid them not to come to me.* Let them come then, when they are grown up; let them come when they understand; let them come, when they are taught whither they are to come; let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ. Why should their innocent age make haste to the forgiveness of sin? Men act more cautiously in temporal concerns. Worldly substance is not committed to those, to whom divine things are intrusted. Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may seem to give to him that asketh."

"It is for a reason of no less importance, that unmarried persons, both those who were never married, and those who have been deprived of their partners, should, on account of their exposure to temptation, be kept waiting, till they are either married, or confirmed in a habit of chaste single life. They who under-

stand the importance of baptism, will be more afraid of hastening to receive it, than of delay: an entire faith secures salvation."

An attentive examination of this passage will make the following things evident.

1. The object of Tertullian is, to caution the Christian church against a hasty, premature, rash administration of the rite of baptism: — non temere credendum esse, — *it is not to be rashly administered.* He meets the objections which some might make to delaying the ordinance, or to declining to administer it, by appealing to the Scriptures; *Give not that which is holy to the dogs; lay hands suddenly on no man*, etc.

2. He urges the delay of baptism in regard to *several sorts* of persons, especially in regard to *infants.* "A delay of baptism," he says, "is more profitable according to every one's condition, disposition, or age, but especially in regard to *little ones*, *parvulos*, [*παιδία, βρέφεα.*] For what necessity is there that the sponsors should incur danger? For they may fail of their promises by reason of mortality, or be disappointed by the springing up of a bad disposition."

The argument is plainly this, "The little ones especially (præcipuè) ought to have their baptism delayed." Why? because a bad disposition may spring up, and the sponsors, (those who offered them up in baptism, and became responsible for their religious education, and their good behavior,) be thus disappointed and fail of performing their engagements. The whole argument clearly shows, from its very nature, that *infants* must be intended by *parvulos.* If not, why did they need *sponsors?* They could engage for themselves. Moreover if *adults* were intended, then their *disposition* would have already sprung up, and developed itself; and what danger would there have been of the disappointment which Tertullian fears?

The whole passage, by the most certain implication, shows that the "little ones" (parvulos) were such as had not developed their disposition, and such as did not and could not stand sponsers for themselves. Now Tertullian cautioned the sponsors not to

take such engagements upon themselves, as all their efforts to fulfil them might be frustrated.

3. This passage clearly shows, that *Infant Baptism* was commonly practised at the time when Tertullian lived, that is, a hundred years after the apostles.

This appears from the reasoning. He notices a text which was doubtless appealed to by those who were accustomed to baptize their children. Our Lord says indeed, *forbid them* (parvulos) *not to come unto me.* The force of this he feels it necessary to parry. "Let them come, then," he says, "when they are grown up: let them come when they learn: [let them come] when they are taught whither they are coming." All this shows beyond any reasonable doubt, that Tertullian was attacking the *custom* of bringing children to be baptized *before* they were grown up, or had learned, or had been taught whither they were to come in baptism; that is, that he was attacking the *custom* of having them baptized in an infantile state. This must be admitted, or there is no sense in the passage. And what follows makes it, if possible, still more clear that he was opposing such a custom.

"Let them become *Christians*," he says, "when they are able to know Christ." Their being devoted to Christ in baptism he represents as their *becoming Christians;* and he objects to their becoming Christians at an age, when they were incapable of knowing Christ. Again he says: "Why should those who are of an age that is innocent, be eager for remission of sins?" That is, why should those who are so young as to be incapable of sinning, be eager to obtain forgiveness? — as he thought was done by baptism.

With the correctness or incorrectness of Tertullian's religious opinions we have, I have said, no concern here. Our only inquiry is, whether it is implied in the passage above quoted from his writings, that it was in his day *the prevailing custom to baptize little children.* That there was such a custom is evident from the fact, that he made opposition against it as actually existing.

He goes on with his objection against the practice of Infant Baptism. "Men act with more caution," he says," in temporal

matters. Worldly substance is not committed to those, to whom divine things are entrusted." That is, little children, as all agree, are not to be entrusted with the care of worldly substance; and yet you entrust them with divine things, which are so much more important.

Still, not content with all this, he repeats an idea which he had before suggested. "Let them know how to seek for salvation, that you may appear to give to them who ask." That is; you have been accustomed to give baptism to those who could not ask for it. Discontinue this practice; and give baptism to those only who are capable of requesting it for themselves.

He finally urges delay in administering baptism to unmarried persons, on account of their being peculiarly exposed to temptation. He does not forbid baptism in their case, but urges the postponement of it, until they are either married, or established in habits of continence. He says; "If any understand the weight of baptismal obligations, they will be more fearful about taking them, than about putting them off."

From this famous, singular, and controverted passage in Tertullian, it is then perfectly clear, that there was in his day a practice of baptizing *infants*, that is, those who had, and could have, no knowledge of Christ; that he was himself strongly opposed to the practice; and that he was opposed because he thought that, while baptism secured the forgiveness of all the sins *previously* committed, the sins committed *after* baptism exposed the soul to the utmost peril. It was on this account that he would have baptism delayed in respect to all those who would be particularly liable to temptation and to sin, — which he considered to be the case with those who were unmarried, and those who were in infancy. This was at the bottom of his zeal for delaying baptism in regard to infants and others. And it all implies that the practice against which he argued, was common. Otherwise, why did he so earnestly oppose it?

The reasoning of Tertullian against the baptism of *unmarried persons*, is, you have seen, the same as against the baptism of *infants;* namely, that they are exposed to temptation, and are in

special danger of falling into sin. But if Chrstian rites are to be deferred until men are free from temptation and the danger of sin; when are they to be performed?

It should be specially noted, that Tertullian does not appeal to any usage of the church, or of any part of the church, from the apostles' day to his, in support of his opinions against Infant Baptism. Now if it had not been the uniform practice of the Christian church from the beginning, to baptize infants, how easy would it have been for him to say so, and to represent Infant Baptism as a dangerous innovation, and thus to put it down at once. He showed great zeal against the practice; and if he could have opposed it by asserting that it was a practice unknown in the early Christian churches; could he have failed of using such an argument?

Suppose that Tertullian had set himself to argue on the other side in the same manner as on this; suppose he had taken great pains to point out the evils of neglecting or delaying Infant Baptism, and had earnestly expostulated with those who exposed themselves and others to those evils; would it not be implied, that Infant Baptism was *neglected* or *delayed* in his day? And suppose he had shown great zeal to support Infant Baptism, and had labored to persuade the churches to practise it, and yet had made no mention of its having ever been the usage of the Christian church; would not every one say, this is a presumptive proof that he was endeavoring to support an innovation, and that there had been no established usage in favor of Infant Baptism to which he was able to appeal in support of his opinion? Could it be supposed that a learned Christian bishop, within a hundred years of the apostles, would be ignorant of what the custom was which they handed down to the churches, or would neglect to refer to the usage of the churches, as far as he was able, for the support of his own views? *

* The following remarks are extracted from Wardlaw's Dissertation on Infant Baptism. See Appendix A. p. 207: "Tertullian was remarkable for singular and extravagant opinions. On the particular subject before us, he not only advised the delay of baptism in the case of *infants*, but also of *unmarried* persons. Will

Perhaps some one may say, that, if Infant Baptism had been the general practice of the Christian church, it must have been expressly mentioned by some writer previous to Tertullian. But it is to be remembered, that there was no considerable writer previous to the age of Tertullian, except Justin Martyr. Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus were his contemporaries. Now are there not many questions of great moment respecting the canonical credit of the books of the New Testament, and respecting various doctrines and usages in the Christian church, which are not mentioned in any of the scanty remains of the first ages after the apostles? But it is to be particularly noticed, that the first express mention we find of Infant Baptism clearly implies, that it was then the common practice.

As to the construction which R. Robinson, in his History of Baptism, and others who agree with him, put upon the testimony of Tertullian — how can any man think that it has the least shadow of reason to support it, or that it can stand a moment before an impartial examination?

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our Baptist brethren admit the inference as to the latter, which they draw as to the former? The truth is, that, as to *both* the *legitimate* inference is the contrary. The very *advice to delay*, is a conclusive evidence of the *previous existence of the practice.* This is the point. The *opinion* is nothing to the purpose. It has no authority. His *condemning* the practice of baptizing infants, not only proves its previous existence; it proves more. It proves that it was no innovation. When a man condemns a practice, he is naturally desirous to support his peculiar views by the strongest arguments. Could Tertullian, therefore, have shown, that the practice was of recent origin; that it had been introduced in his own day, or even at any time subsequent to the lives of the apostles; we have every reason to believe, he would have availed himself of a ground so obvious, and so conclusive. It proves still further, that the baptism of infants was the *general practice of the church* in Tertullian's time His opinion is his own. It is that of a dissentient from the universal body of professing Christians. He never pretends to say, that any part of the church had held or acted upon it. But the total absence of any attempt to support and recommend it by appeal to the practice of the church in apostolic times, or of any part of the church at any intervening period between those times and his own, certainly goes far to prove the *matter of fact*, that Infant Baptism was the original and universal practice.

Testimony of Origen.

"Since Origen was born, A. D. 185, that is 85 years after the apostles, his grandfather, or at least his great-grandfather must have lived in the apostles' time. And as he could not be ignorant whether he was himself baptized in infancy, so he had no further than his own family to go for inquiry, how it was practised in the times of the apostles. Besides, Origen was a learned man, and could not be ignorant of the usages of the churches; in most of which he had also travelled; for as he was born and bred at Alexandria, so it appears from Eusebius, that he had lived in Greece, and at Rome, and in Cappadocia, and Arabia, and spent the main part of his life in Syria and Palestine." *

The principal passages in the writings of Origen, in which the baptism of infants is mentioned, are the following:

Homily 8th, on Levit. c. xii.

"According to *the usage of the church*, baptism is given even to infants; when if there were nothing in infants which needed forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would seem to be superfluous."

This testimony needs no comment in regard to the fact, that infants were baptized.

Homily on Luke xiv.

"Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or can there be any reason for the laver in their case, unless it be according to the sense we have mentioned above; viz., no one is free from pollution, though he has lived but one day upon earth. And because by baptism native pollution is taken away, therefore *infants* are *baptized*."

But the testimony of Origen which is the most important of all, is in his

* Wall's History of Infant Baptism, vol. I. p. 73.

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, lib. 5.

"For this cause it was that the church received an order from the apostles, to give baptism even to infants."

These testimonies not only imply that Infant Baptism was generally known and practised, but also mention it as *an order received from the apostles.* And although some may doubt the correctness of Origen's reasoning as to the ground of the practice; no one can reasonably doubt that he is a good witness of the fact, that such was the practice, and that it was understood to be received from the apostles.

To any objections which have been made to the genuineness of these quotations from Origen, I refer to Wall's History, Chap. 5, as containing a satisfactory answer. I shall cite only the following:

"In these translations of Origen, (translations from the original Greek, which is lost, into Latin,) — "if there were found but one or two places, and those in Rufinus alone, which speak of Infant Baptism; there might have been suspicion of their being interpolations. But when there are so many of them, brought in on several occasions, in translations made by several men, who were of several parties, and enemies to one another, and upon no temptation, (for it is certain that in their time there was no dispute about Infant Baptism,) — that they should all be forged without any reason, is absurd to think. Especially if we consider that these translators lived not much more than a hundred years after Origen's time; the Christians then must have known whether infants had been used to be baptized in Origen's time, or not; — the very tradition from father to son must have carried a memory of it for so short a time. And then, for them to make Origen speak of a thing which all the world knew was not in use in his time, must have made them ridiculous."

Testimony of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, 150 years after the apostles.

In the year 253, sixty-six bishops met in Council at Carthage.

Fidus, a country bishop, had sent a letter with two cases, on which he desired their opinion. The one, which related to our present subject, was, whether an infant might be baptized before it was eight days old. It will be sufficient for my purpose to cite the following passages from the Letter of the bishops.

"Cyprian and the rest of the bishops who were present in the council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus our Brother, Greeting."

—"As to the case of Infants; — whereas you judge *that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, that no one should be baptized and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born;* we were all in the Council of a very different opinion." "This therefore was our opinion in the Council; that we ought not to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God. And this rule, as it holds for all, is, we think, more especially to be observed in reference to infants, even to those newly born."

Respecting these quotations, I would suggest the following remarks:

First. Whatever we may think of the opinions of Cyprian and the bishops connected with him, respecting the grounds of Infant Baptism; their testimony to the fact, which is all we now inquire after, holds good.

Second. The quotations above made from the letter of the bishops prove incontrovertibly, that Infant Baptism was well known and commonly practised at that time. It is plain that Fidus who put the question, and the bishops who resolved it, both took it for granted that infants were to be baptized; only Fidus thought it should be omitted till the eighth day.

Third. This testimony has great weight; as it is impossible to suppose that not one of sixty-six bishops, living 150 years after the apostles, and so near the time of Origen and Tertullian, and headed by the most distinguished man then in the Christian church, should not have doubted the propriety of applying baptism to infants, if the church hitherto had not made it their common practice.

The arguments of Wall prove, beyond all question, the genuine-

ness of this Epistle of Cyprian and his fellow bishops. (See History of Inf. Bap. Vol. I. chap. 6.) The Epistle contains incontrovertible, overpowering evidence of the usual practice of the churches in Cyprian's time, and, of course, in times previous to his. If the practice had been a novelty, or if there had been any considerable division or controversy in the churches respecting it; how could such a circumstance have been forgotten, or passed over in silence?

Optatus.

This father lived 260 years after the apostles. In the passage to which I shall refer, he had been comparing a Christian's putting on Christ in baptism, to putting on a garment. He then says: "But lest any one say, I speak irreverently in calling Christ a garment, let him read what the Apostle says, *as many of you as have been baptized in the name of Christ have put on Christ.* Oh! what a garment is this, which is always one, and which fits all ages and all shapes. It is neither too large for *infants*, nor too small for young men."

The meaning of this passage in regard to the subject before us, is perfectly plain.

Gregory Nazianzen, 260 years after the apostles.

The passage I shall cite is from his Oration on Basil. Orat. 20. After comparing Basil to Abraham, Moses, etc., he compares him to Samuel, and undertakes to show the points of similitude between them.

"Samuel among them that call upon his name was given before he was born, and immediately after his birth was consecrated, and he became an anointer of kings and priests out of a horn. And was not this man, (Basil,) consecrated to God in his infancy from the womb, and carried to the steps," (doubtless the baptismal font,) "in a coat?" He plainly referred to the coat which was used in baptism, and compared it to the coat which was made for

Samuel by his mother. This is a clear testimony to what was usual in regard to baptism at that time.

Wall has given an abstract of Gregory's oration on baptism, to which I must refer the reader. Gregory first gives his opinion in favor of delaying the baptism of children till they are three years old. Still he expresses it in such a manner as to imply, that the usual practice was against him. But on reconsidering all the circumstances of the case, he advises that infants should be baptized.

The testimony of Ambrose shows that the baptism of infants was common in his day.

Chrysostom, who lived 280 years after the apostles, plainly shows what was the practice of the churches in regard to Infant Baptism in his day, and how he regarded it himself.

I quote only one passage, which is in a Homily cited by Julian and by Austin, and which contains a very explicit recognition of Infant Baptism. He says, "Some think that the heavenly grace (of baptism) consists only in forgiveness of sins; but I have reckoned up ten advantages of it. For this cause *we baptize infants also, though they are not defiled with sin;*" or as Austin has quoted it from the Greek of Chrysostom, — "though they have not any transgressions," — meaning, doubtless, *actual sins.*

Augustin, (or Austin) a Christian father highly distinguished both for his learning and piety, flourished 288 years after the apostles. The testimonies which he gave to the fact, that infants were baptized, and that this usage was universally understood and acknowledged to have been handed down from the apostles, are very plain and explicit.

Remarking on the passage 1 Cor. 7: 14, Austin says; "There were then *Christian infants*, (parvuli Christiani,) who were sanctified," that is, baptized, "by the authority of one or both of their parents." In another place, he speaks of the good which Christian baptism does to infants, and says that *the faith of those by whom the child is brought to be consecrated, is profitable to the child.* In his book against the Donatists, he speaks of those who were baptized in infancy or in childhood.

In the same book, he says, where baptism is had, if faith is by

necessity wanting, salvation is secured. He then adds; "Which the whole body of the church holds, as delivered to them, in the case of little infants who are baptized; who certainly cannot believe with the heart unto righteousness. And yet no Christian will say, they are baptized in vain."

Although Austin here mentioned Infant Baptism incidentally, his words show that it was universally practised, and had been so from time immemorial, and that no Christian of any sect was of a different opinion. "And they had only 300 years to look back to the apostles; whereas we now have 1800. And the writings and records which are now lost, were then extant, and easily known."

Austin's Letter to Boniface, which treats mainly of the subject of Infant Baptism, shows beyond the possibility of doubt, that it was universally practised by the church, and was understood to be a divine appointment.

In his book on Genesis, he says: "The custom of our mother the church in baptizing infants must not be disregarded, nor accounted useless; and it must by all means be believed to be a tradition, (or order) of the apostles; apostolica traditio." And in accordance with this, he says, in another place: "It is most justly believed to be no other than a thing delivered," (ordered, or taught,) by apostolic authority; that is, that it came not by a general council, or by any authority later or less than that of the apostles." And again he speaks of baptizing infants "by the authority of the whole church, which was undoubtedly delivered by our Lord and his apostles."

In his book against the Donatists, while maintaining the validity of baptism, though administered to those who are destitute of faith, he refers especially to those who were baptized when they were infants or youths; "maxime qui infantes vel pueri baptizati sunt."

The universal acknowledgment of Infant Baptism as a practice derived from the apostles, is brought out frequently and very clearly in the controversy between Austin and the Pelagians. The Pelagians, who denied original sin, were pressed with the

argument from Infant Baptism. It would have been very much to their purpose to assert, had it been in their power, that the baptism of infants was not enjoined by Christ or his apostles. If they had known any society of Christians existing in their day or before, who disowned Infant Baptism; their interest would have led them to plead such an example in their own behalf. But they were far from anything like this. Celestius owns that infants are to be baptized according to the rule of the universal church; and Pelagius complained that some men slandered him as if he denied baptism to infants; but declared that he never had heard of any one, no not even of an impious heretic or sectary, who denied Infant Baptism.

Now, according to Wall, (to whom I am chiefly indebted for these testimonies and results,) if there had been any church in the world that did not baptize infants, these two men must have heard of them, being such travellers as they were. For they were born and bred, the one in Britain, the other in Ireland. They lived a long time at Rome, to which all the people of the known world had resort. They were both for some time at Carthage in Africa. Then the one settled in Jerusalem, and the other travelled through all the noted churches in Europe and Asia. It is impossible there should have been any church, which had a singular practice as to Infant Baptism, but they must have heard of it. So that we may fairly conclude that there was not at that time, nor within the memory of the men of that time, any Christian society which denied baptism to infants.

I shall here subjoin an argument of great weight, and nearly in the words of Wall, Vol. I. chap. 21; namely; that Irenæus, Epiphanius, Philastrius, Austin, and Theodoret, who wrote catalogues of all the sects and sorts of Christians that they knew or had ever heard of, make no mention of any who denied *Infant* Baptism, except those who denied *all* baptism. Each of them, he says, mentions some sects that used no baptism at all; and these sects Austin represents as disowning the Scripture, or a great part of it. But of all the sects that acknowledged water baptism in any case, no one is mentioned that denied it to infants.

Now since all these authors make it their business to rehearse the opinions and usages which the various sects held different from the church at large, and yet mention no difference in this respect; we may well conclude that all of them practised in this particular as the church at large did. If the church had not baptized infants, and the sectaries had, it would have been noted. And if the church had baptized infants, and the sectaries had not, that also would have been noted. For these writers tell us that each sect had its peculiarities. And they mention differences of much less moment than this would have been.

I shall only add the remark of Wall, *that the first body of men we read of, that denied baptism to infants, were the Petrobrusians, A. D.* 1150.

Thus it appears that we have evidence as abundant, and specific, and certain, as history affords of almost any other fact, that Infant Baptism universally prevailed from the days of the apostles through four centuries. Baptists and Pedobaptists are satisfied, on the ground of Ecclesiastical History, that the churches immediately succeeding the apostles, observed the first day of the week as a sacred day; that the books, of which our Testament is composed, were generally acknowledged as of divine authority; that the Lord's Supper was frequently celebrated, and that women partook of it as well as men. But which of these facts is better supported by historical evidence, than the baptism of infants?

On the value of this argument from early Ecclesiastical History, I shall offer a few remarks.

It cannot with any good reason be denied or doubted that those Christian writers, who have, in different ways, given testimony to the prevalence of Infant Baptism in the early ages of Christianity, are credible witnesses. Nor can it be denied, that they were under the best advantages to know, whether the practice of Infant Baptism commenced in the time of the apostles. On this subject, as they were not likely to mistake, so their testimony is entitled to full credit.

Infant Baptism was a subject, in which early Christians must have felt a *very lively interest*. It was a thing of the most public

nature, and a mistake concerning it must have been altogether improbable, — I might say impossible. It was certainly impossible that Christians should be mistaken as to the question, whether Infant Baptism was generally practised in their own age. And it must have been almost as impossible for them to be mistaken, as to the practice of the preceding age. For they had memories, as well as we; and they had oral communications; and they had written records also. And why should not they have known what took place in the time of their fathers, as well as we know what took place in the time of *our* fathers? But surely we have no doubt whether *we* were baptized in infancy; or whether our parents were baptized in infancy; or whether in the days of our fathers it was the uniform practice of the churches with which we are connected, to give baptism to children. Who can imagine that we are in any danger of mistake, as to the practice of the first churches of New England relative to their infant offspring? If any one should take upon him to deny that those churches baptized their children; we should think him extremely ignorant, or in sport. We deem it sufficient, that our fathers have told us it was so, and that we never heard any one question it. But besides this, there are many circumstances which plainly imply it; and we have books, written at the time, which contain indubitable evidence of the fact. We say too, that the very existence of the practice at the present time, considering how public and how important a thing it is, must be regarded as conclusive evidence that it was the practice two hundred years ago, unless it can be made to appear, that a change has taken place, and that our churches have been induced to renounce their former views, and to embrace the doctrine of Infant Baptism. If such a change has taken place, let it be made to appear. If no evidence of this can be produced, it is just to conclude, that no change has taken place, and that the present practice is only a continuation of that which prevailed in New England from the first.

These remarks are applicable to the subject under consideration. My position is, that the fathers, from whom I have made citations relative to the practice of Infant Baptism, are credible witnesses;

that they were under the best advantages to know whether the practice had prevailed from the days of the apostles, and accordingly, that their testimony on the subject is entitled to entire confidence. In different circumstances, and in different countries, they stand forth as witnesses, that Infant Baptism had been the uniform practice of the Christian church from the beginning. Although they lived at different periods, they were all near enough to the time of the apostles to obtain correct information respecting a practice like this. In their own time the practice was universal. They tell us it had been so from the beginning. Some of them would have been quite ready to deny this, if they could have found any reasons for doing so. But they unite in declaring, that the practice had been universal in the Christian church from the time of the apostles.

Should any one say, there might have been a change, and the baptism of infants might have been introduced afterward, either gradually or suddenly; I would ask, where is the evidence of this? Even if all, who lived at the time, had been united in such a change, it could not have taken place without leaving some clear proof of the fact; some traces, which would have been visible to those who succeeded. But is it supposable that all who lived at the time of such a change, would be united in it? And if they were not united, there must be some evidence of the disunion; some traces of the controversy of disagreeing parties; some account of the remonstrances of the more conscientious and faithful against those who were unstable, and who wished to make unwarrantable changes, and of the arguments of such innovators to justify themselves against the charge of corrupting the simplicity of a Christian institution. But where is the evidence of such a change? Where do we find any traces of it? What declaration, suggestion, or allusion is there, in any written history, or in any tradition, making it certain, or in any degree probable, that such a change ever took place? Who ever heard of the contention of parties on this subject; of the remonstrances of the faithful, or the apologies of innovators? Now if the early Christians had among them any of the vigilance and zeal of those who, in

modern times, have denied Infant Baptism; how could the baptism of infants have been introduced without exciting dissatisfaction, complaint and opposition? Take the Baptist churches, now distinguished for their piety and zeal in Great Britain, America or India. Should any of these churches attempt to introduce Infant Baptism, would not a loud voice be quickly raised against them? Would they not be obliged to encounter arguments too many, and opposition too decided, to be either despised, or forgotten? Now turn to the primitive churches. If they did not consider Infant Baptism a divine institution, why did they not lift up their voice and array their arguments against it, when it was first brought into use? We have very ancient and particular accounts of controversies and heresies on a great variety of subjects, both doctrinal and practical. How happens it, that we have no account of *the heresy* of Infant Baptism, and no account of any controversy respecting it? If we may judge from what has appeared in modern times, we should think that there are few subjects more likely to excite attention than this, and few subjects on which the disagreement of Christians would be more likely to be attended with warmth, or more likely to be remembered.

These remarks are sufficient to show the value of the argument from Ecclesiastical History. The testimony of the early Christian writers in favor of Infant Baptism, as the uniform practice of the church, is worthy of full credit, and as the circumstances were, affords a conclusive argument that it was a divine institution. And I well know, that an argument like this on the opposite side, would be quite as much relied upon by those who deny Infant Baptism, as this is relied upon by us. If they could but make it appear by citations from Ecclesiastical Histories, that the churches, immediately after the time of the apostles, were united *in rejecting* Infant Baptism, and that this continued to be the case for more than a thousand years, without the exception of a single church or individual Christian who pleaded for the practice; would they not earnestly seize this fact, and confidently rely upon it, as an unanswerable argument against Infant Baptism? I would seriously propose this view of the subject to the consideration of those who

differ from us on the question at issue. Let them remember how much writers on their side have labored to show, that Infant Baptism was not the universal practice of the early Christian churches; and how much stress they have laid on the least shadow of evidence, that primitive Christians, in any instances, did not baptize their children. Now if they could produce clear evidence that *Christians in general* were not accustomed to baptize children; if they could produce one plain declaration, or even the slightest hint, from Origen, Augustine, or Pelagius, showing that Infant Baptism was not practised by the first Christian churches, and that no order or tradition in favor of it was ever received from the apostles, — or even expressing a doubt on the subject, would they not hold this to be an unquestionable proof against Infant Baptism? And would not their confidence in such a conclusion rise to the highest pitch, if they could make it appear that, when Infant Baptism was first introduced, earnest and repeated remonstrances were made against it, as a dangerous innovation? But as the proof from Ecclesiastical History is wholly on the other side, and shows clearly, that infant Baptism was the uniform practice of the church in the ages succeeding the apostles; and as no want of genuineness in the works referred to, and no want of clearness or fulness in the testimonies which they contain can be pretended; how can our Baptist brethren deny the force of this argument in favor of Infant Baptism?

If there should be any remaining doubt in your minds, as to the propriety of relying on the testimony of uninspired men on such a subject as this, and if you should think, that nothing but an express declaration from the word of God ought to satisfy us; I would turn your attention for a few moments to the consequences of adhering to this principle. In the first place, what evidence have you, except the testimony of uninspired men, that the several books which constitute the Old Testament, as we now have it, are the very books to which Christ and the apostles referred as the word of God? Neither of them has given us any specific instruction on this point; and we go to Josephus, who was neither an inspired man, nor a Christian; to the Talmud, and to Jerome, Origen,

Aquila, and other uninspired men, to find a list of the books, which we are to receive as given by inspiration of God; and having proved from their testimony, that these were the books which Christ and the apostles regarded as sacred writings, we prove in other ways, that those writings have come down to us without any material alteration. And we must use the same kind of reasoning in regard to the New Testament. We have no voice from heaven, and no express testimony of any inspired writer, that the several books, which compose the entire Canon of the New Testament, were given by inspiration of God, or that they were all written by the apostles, or even by Christians. But we go to Eusebius, and to other uninspired writers, and we find, that *they* regarded these books, as the genuine productions of those to whom they are commonly ascribed, and as having divine authority. It is on such evidence as this, that we rely for the support of those sacred books, which are the basis of our faith, and which teach us what are the doctrines and precepts and rites of our religion. And why should we not rely on their testimony, in regard to the manner in which a religious rite was understood and applied by the churches, in the first ages of Christianity? Why should we not confide in them as credible witnesses of a fact, which they had the best opportunity to be acquainted with, and no temptation to misrepresent? *

* I am reluctant to say what I think respecting the manner in which some Baptist writers have treated the historical argument in favor of Infant Baptism. I make the appeal to men of any denomination, who have the requisite qualifications, whether an instance can easily be found, of greater unfairness, or of a more determined effort to discolor all facts, and evade all arguments on the opposite side, than is exhibited in the writers referred to.

Whether we are engaged in confuting error, or in defending the truth, it is our bounden duty to use the faculties which God has given us, with Christian candor, and with the most exact integrity and impartiality. Any deviation from these in our inquiries after truth, or in the manner of conducting controversy, must be as offensive to God, to say the least, as unfairness, dishonesty, or artful evasion, in the common transactions of life. The God of truth neither requires nor permits us to use carnal weapons in defence of his cause. I have frequently been ready to say that God would rather see us contend for *error* with a *right spirit*, than for *truth*, with a *wrong*.

LECTURE CXVII.

BAPTISM IN RELATION TO CIRCUMCISION.

I HAVE now exhibited the arguments which I regard as most weighty and conclusive in favor of the position, that the apostles understood their commission to proselyte and baptize, as including children. There are, however, several remaining topics, more or less related to the subject, which must be carefully considered. And when thus considered, they will afford important collateral evidence in support of Infant Baptism, and will have a favorable influence upon the minds of candid inquirers after the truth.

One of these remaining topics is, *baptism considered in relation to circumcision.*

It is common to speak of one thing as coming in the place of another, when there is a general agreement between them, as to the object sought, or the end to be answered, how different soever they may be in other respects. Thus our meeting-houses, or churches, are spoken of as coming in the place of the Jewish temple and synagogues, because they agree in being designed for *public worship*, and *public religious instruction.* As to the form of the buildings, and the particular mode of worship and instruction, they differ greatly. So also in regard to the general end sought, we consider ministers of the gospel as substituted for the Levitical Priesthood ; the more spiritual services of Christians for the daily sacrifices of the Jews ; and the Lord's Supper for the Passover. In each of these cases, there is an obvious agreement in regard to the general object in view, between the former insti-

tution, and that which comes in its stead. So in civil matters. A law formerly existed, requiring a thief to be punished by scourging; but that law has been set aside, and another enacted, requiring a thief to labor in prison, with solitary confinement at night. This mode of punishment, we speak of as a *substitute* for the other, because it relates to the same subject, and is intended to answer the same general purpose. Thus too we speak of imprisonment or exile as *substituted* for death.

From these examples you learn how such language is commonly used. And it must be proper to use it in the same sense, in relation to the subject before us. The position which has been maintained by the ablest writers, and which I shall endeavor to defend, is, that *baptism comes in the place of circumcision.* This position is not founded so much on any particular text, as on the general representations of Scripture, and the nature of the case. When God adopted Abraham and his posterity to be his peculiar people, he commanded them to be circumcised; and it appears from the representations of Moses and Paul, that those who received this rite were under special obligations to be holy. Circumcision was, then, a sign put upon Abraham and his seed, showing them to be a *peculiar people*, under peculiar obligations to God, and entitled to peculiar blessings. Just so baptism is a sign, put upon the people of God under the new dispensation, signifying *substantially* the same obligations and blessings, as those which were signified by circumcision; — the same, I say, *substantially*, though in some circumstances different. If then circumcision was a rite, by which persons were admitted into the society of God's people, and consecrated to his service, under the former dispensation; and if circumcision is set aside, and baptism is the rite by which persons are admitted into the society of God's people and consecrated to his service, under the new dispensation; it is evident that baptism has succeeded in the place of circumcision. We cannot but be satisfied with this conclusion, if one of these rites was, in all important respects, the same as the other; and particularly, if they were both appointed, as a seal of the same general promise of God to his people, and of the same general relation of his people to him.

Now if baptism comes in the place of circumcision, and is, in the most important respects, designed for the same purpose; we should think there must be some similarity between them in regard to the extent of their personal application. Under the former dispensation, if any who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were made proselytes to the Jewish religion, they were circumcised. Accordingly, if under the present dispensation, any who have been enemies to the spirit of Christianity, are converted and made disciples of Christ, they are to be baptized. This conclusion, which we should naturally adopt from the circumstance that baptism was substituted in the place of circumcision, perfectly agrees with the particular instruction given in the New Testament. The command as to baptism related primarily to those who became proselytes to Christ, whether they were Jews or gentiles. It related to *believers*. These were to be baptized, just as adult proselytes to Judaism had before been circumcised. And what is the natural conclusion respecting the *children* of believers? Plainly this; that as the children of Abraham, the father of believers, and the children of all proselytes to the true religion, were formerly circumcised; so the children of all believers are now to be baptized. This must be our conclusion, unless the word of God expressly forbids Infant Baptism, or unless there is something in the nature and design of baptism, which makes it manifestly unsuitable to apply it to infant children.

The fact that circumcision was applied only to *men*, is of no consequence as to the argument; because women in that case, as in many others, were considered as represented by men, and connected with them. Consequently the meaning of infant circumcision must have been the same, as though it had been applied to persons of both sexes. But the distinction, formerly made between male and female in regard to the application of the seal of the covenant, is done away under the Christian dispensation. The seal is now to be applied to believers of both sexes; and of course to all their children, whether sons or daughters.

The chief objection to this view of the subject arises from the fact, that Abraham's *servants* were all circumcised.

In reply to this objection, I remark, first; that the great promise of the covenant expressly related to parents and *children*. "I will be a God to *thee* and to *thy seed*." This was the *natural*, *primary* relation. The relation of servants to their master was not natural, but *incidental* and *subordinate*. So that it would be nothing strange, if less respect should be shown to this relation, than to the relation of children to parents. It was so under the former dispensation. The circumcision of *children* was a prominent thing. This was to be observed in all generations, so long as that economy continued. Whether there was any occasion to circumcise servants, or not, the circumcision of *children* was never to fail. Now it would seem perfectly reasonable to suppose, that in respect to this natural *primary* relation, the seal of the covenant under the new dispensation should be applied in the same manner as under the old, though it might not be in respect to the other relation, which is incidental and inferior. But secondly, I do not consider baptism as by any means intended to be confined to *parents* and *children*. If a Christian takes the children of his children, or the children of any relative, into a near relation to himself, and engages to be as a father to them; it is, in my view, perfectly suitable that he should consecrate them to God by baptism. And I think the same also in regard to orphans, or any other children, whom a Christian guardian or master receives into his family, and undertakes, as sponsor, to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So that the parallel between circumcision and baptism need not be supposed entirely to fail, even in regard to those who stand in other relations beside that of children.

A very careful examination and reëxamination of this subject, has brought me to the conclusion, that the appointment and uniform practice of infant circumcision, in connection with the reasons on which it rested and the circumstances attending it, would naturally lead the apostles, and must lead us, to understand the rite of baptism as coming generally in the place of circumcision, and as meant to be applied to infant children. The reasoning which appertains to this subject will be exhibited more fully in another

place. I might make citations from a multitude of the most respectable authors, containing statements of this argument in different forms. But I shall content myself with referring to Calvin's Institutes, Book 4, ch. 16; Dwight's Discourses on Infant Baptism; Storr's Bib. Theol. Book 4, § 112, together with Ill. 4th of the same section; and Knapp's Theology, § 142, 2.

Seal of the Covenant.

If we would arrive at satisfactory views on this subject, we must learn directly from the Scriptures, in what sense the word *covenant* is there used.

The Greek διαθήκη, like the corresponding Hebrew בְּרִית, signifies, in general, *any arrangement, constitution, establishment, economy, or plan of proceeding.* Schleusner says, *notat dispositionem, qualiscumque ea sit;* and generally, *omne, quod cum summa certitudine et fide factum est.* The use of the word in the Septuagint he represents to be the same: *Omne, quod certum et constitutum est; whatever is appointed and made sure; an established constitution, or plan.* It is from this general sense, that all the particular senses are derived. Thus διαθήκη, *appointment, plan, establishment,* is sometimes a *Will,* or *Testament;* sometimes a *promise;* sometimes a *precept;* sometimes a *compact;* and sometimes an *economy,* or *method of acting.* The word signifies one or another of these, as circumstances require. Thus in Heb. 9: 16, 17, διαθήκη must evidently mean a *Testament,* or *Will.* The writer says, a *Testament,* διαθήκη, is of force after men are dead, and is of no force while the testator liveth. Here the word signifies, *the arrangement,* or *disposition,* which a man directs to be made of his affairs after his decease. In Luke 1: 72, the word denotes the divine promise. Zacharias celebrates the faithfulness of God in "remembering his holy *covenant,* the *oath* that he sware to Abraham," referring to the promise of a Saviour. Here διαθήκη signifies that divine *arrangement, plan,* or *appointment,* respecting a Saviour, which was made known in the way of a promise to Abraham. In Gen. 9: 9—18, God speaks of making a *covenant* with man, and with the whole animal creation, and with the earth too, and represents this covenant

as *between him and them.* Many persons understand such a phrase to denote an *agreement* or *contract*, in which two parties unite, and in the execution of which both parties have an agency. But this cannot be the meaning of the phrase in the present case; for the irrational part of the creation were incapable of having any agency either in forming or executing such an agreement. The thing promised was, *that the earth should not again be destroyed by a deluge.* This was *God's covenant;* and it was said to be between *God* and *all the inhabitants of the earth*, *rational* and *irrational*, because the thing which God determined and promised *related* to them. So that what is here called *God's covenant*, was in reality his *determination* and *promise* as to the manner in which *he would treat man*, and *beast*, and *the earth.* The earth and its inhabitants were in no sense a party to this divine covenant or arrangement, except as they were to be benefited by it. This establishment, or declared purpose of God, had a *seal.* "God said, I will set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of *the covenant between me and the earth.*" The rainbow was appointed to be a sign of the truth of God's promise; a pledge of the certain execution of the purpose he had declared.

From this case we learn, that a covenant of God may have respect to those who are incapable of having any agency either in agreeing to it, or in carrying it into execution. It may respect the animal creation, day and night, and the earth itself. And if so, it may surely have respect to *infant children.* And this is no more than saying, that God may have a determination, or settled purpose, as to the manner in which he will *treat* infant children; and that he may make known such a determination by his word. To such a determination, or settled plan of conduct, the Scriptures give the name of *covenant.*

In some passages, διαθήκη signifies a *command.* It certainly has this sense when applied to the decalogue; as Heb. 9: 4. It has this sense, Acts 7: 8; "God gave him the *covenant* of circumcision;" that is, a *command* to circumcise. I apprehend, however, that the word has a broader meaning here, and denotes

the whole *economy*, which God established in regard to Abraham and his seed, including precepts, promises, and privileges; of which economy circumcision was the sign. And if so, the word in this place has nearly the same sense as it appears to have in Gal. 4: 24, where the phrase *two covenants*, δύο διαθῆκαι, clearly means, the *Mosaic* and the *Christian* economy. So in Heb. 9: 15, *the first covenant* doubtless means the *Mosaic dispensation*, and in v. 20, the *blood of the covenant* is the blood by which that divine economy was confirmed. In the same way we must understand the words of Christ when he instituted the Supper: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." *This cup of wine represents my blood, by which the new dispensation or the Christian covenant is confirmed.*

There is hardly any passage in the Bible, where *covenant* directly and properly means a *compact* or *agreement* between two parties. But in various instances, it may imply this, or something like this, by necessary consequence. For when the word διαθήκη, signifying a divine appointment, precept, or promise, has respect to moral agents, there must be an obligation on their part to accede to such appointment, precept, or promise, and to act according to it. But when the divine covenant, that is, the divine appointment, or constitution, has respect to things not possessed of moral agency; it cannot imply, that they are under any obligation to conform to it, or that they are in any way parties in the covenant, except merely that it has a relation to them. The word *covenant*, therefore, considered as the translation of διαθήκη, and of the corresponding Hebrew, no more signifies an actual agreement between two parties, than the word *economy*, *law*, or *appointment*.

We see, then, that the Scripture sense of the word *covenant*, is materially different from the meaning of covenant in common discourse, where it denotes a mutual agreement. The supposition that the word, as used in the Common Version of the Bible, has this signification, must encumber the subject before us with needless difficulties. For if διαθήκη, *covenant*, is understood to mean an agreement between two parties in relation to the interests of

religion; then there must be two parties *capable* of such agreement, — capable of engaging in a mutual religious transaction. God must be one of the parties; and the other must be intelligent agents, capable of acting in religious concerns. *Infant children* must of course be excluded. Whereas if we duly consider the nature of a *covenant* in the Scripture sense, we shall see, that it may just as well relate to *infant children*, as to *adults*. For surely God may have a *determination*, may make a *promise*, may settle an *economy* or *plan of proceeding*, in regard to children, as well as in regard to men. And such a determination, promise, or economy, being a matter of great consequence, may with the utmost propriety, be marked by a religious rite. And a religious rite, thus introduced, may very justly be considered a *seal* or *confirmation* of God's gracious economy. The obvious use of such a seal is, to keep in lively remembrance the divine determination and promise; to impress the minds of parents with the obligations it imposes on them; and in due time to be a remembrancer to the children of the privileges which the God of their fathers has granted them, and of the gracious economy under which they are placed; and in this way, to produce in their minds a becoming sense of their peculiar obligations, as children of pious parents. These remarks are sufficient to show, the suitableness of applying the appointed seal of the divine covenant to children, as well as to parents. Both parents and children have a deep interest in the covenant, and its seal has an obvious and important significance, whether applied to the former or to the latter.

The Scriptures teach us, that God made a *covenant* with Abraham and his seed; that is, that he made known what was *his purpose respecting them;* that he declared *how he would treat them.* But what was this purpose of God? What was to be his economy, or the course of his administration, towards Abraham and his seed? The Scriptures furnish the answer. God said: "Thou shalt be a father of many nations. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to *be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.* And I will give to thee and to

thy seed after thee — all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I *will be their God.*" Such was the determination which God made known; the economy which he had established. This economy involved essential conditions on the part of Abraham and his seed. And these conditions, declared in one way and another, were that *they should walk before God, and be upright and obedient.* But the circumstance, that a divine promise or plan of proceeding is *conditional*, need not be supposed to diminish its importance, nor to render it any the less proper that it should be marked by a religious rite.

Still more specific views of the nature and extent of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, may be derived from other declarations of Scripture, and from that conduct of God's providence, which is the best interpreter of his word. I shall refer only to one text. Rom. 9: 4. Here, in a very summary way, the Apostle mentions the peculiar privileges of the Israelites, and says, that to them belonged "the adoption, and the glory, and the *covenants*, and the giving of the law, and the service of God." This agrees with the representations, elsewhere made, of the peculiar favors which God bestowed upon that people. He adopted them as his children. He gave them a holy law, written on tables of stone, and a great variety of other precepts, moral and ceremonial, suited to their condition. He raised up prophets to teach and warn them. He displayed his glory in the midst of them; made great and precious promises to them, and from time to time, wrought wonders of power and mercy in their behalf. Thus the children of Israel were a highly favored people; and the place where they dwelt, was a highly favored place. Those who were born there from generation to generation, were born in propitious circumstances. They inherited special privileges. It was the pleasure of God, that they should all be placed under the operation of a gracious economy; should be taught by pious parents, and by consecrated men; should, from their earliest years, hear what God had done for their fathers, and what a holy law he had given them: and should come under those divine influences which, if cherished, would impart to the various privileges they enjoyed,

a saving efficacy. This was God's establishment respecting Abraham and his seed. This was his chosen method of transmitting the true religion from one generation to another; of continuing a church in the world, and of training up his people for heaven. It was a system of *religious education*. The children of God's people were to be considered from their birth, as consecrated to him; and, as soon as they were capable, were to have the doctrines and precepts of his word inculcated upon them, accompanied with the pious example and the prayers of parents, and followed by the promised blessing of God. Children, born under that gracious economy, were thus, by their very birth, brought into a state highly auspicious to their present and eternal welfare. The token of God's covenant, that is, circumcision, was a token of all this kindness on his part, and of all these privileges, prospects, and obligations on the part of parents and children.

Now the divine economy under the reign of Christ is, in all important respects, the same as it was formerly. Children have the same relation to their pious parents, and that relation is of equal importance in the concerns of religion. It is as much the constitution of God, as it was formerly, that religion shall be preserved in the world, and transmitted from one generation to another, chiefly through the influence of a pious education. The children of Christian parents are born into a state as favorable as the children of Israelitish parents were: yea much more favorable. It is as much the will of God, as it was formerly, that they should be piously consecrated to him, and that they should enjoy a religious education, including all the proper forms of instruction and discipline, and all the accompanying influence of a good example and of prayer. And it is as much the appointment of God now, as it ever was, that his blessing shall attend this mode of educating children, and that in this way generally, persons shall be brought into the kingdom of Christ. This is the plan of the divine conduct now, as much as it ever was. So that in regard to the great interests of man, the children of believers are now brought, by their birth, into a state similar to that of the children of God's people in former times. The only important difference is, that

God's establishment, διαθήκη, is more merciful now, — is fraught with higher blessings, than formerly. So that there are all the reasons, which formerly existed, and some in addition, for applying to the children of pious parents a religious rite, which is the appointed token of that gracious economy under which they are placed.

Thus, when we consider what God's covenant or plan of conduct respecting children was formerly, and what it is under the reign of Christ; we cannot but conclude that it is as reasonable and proper to apply to them the *present* seal of the covenant, as it was the *former*. And this view of the subject is, at least, sufficient to expose the futility of any presumption against Infant Baptism, and to show that the presumptive arguments are decidedly in its favor.

The common difficulty which meets us in regard to this reasoning is, *that the transition from the former economy to the latter implied a great change, and that we cannot reason from the one to the other.*

I readily admit, that a very great change took place, when the people of God passed from the Mosaic to the Christian economy; — a change from obscurity to noonday light; from a state in which the Saviour was set forth in promises and symbols, to a state in which he was presented in all his glory, as actually come, and fully invested with the office of the Prophet, Priest, and King of the church; — a change too respecting the place and mode of worship, the power of the motives which enforce the obligations of religion, and the extent to which the blessings of salvation were to be diffused. But whatever was the nature of the change, and to whatever objects it related; it certanly did not imply any diminution of privileges to *children*, and, of course, it could have no influence to prevent the application to them of the seal of the new economy.

In many respects, it is perfectly proper to reason from one economy to the other. Christ and the apostles did reason thus; and it would be easy to produce various instances in which this must be acknowledged by all to be perfectly proper. For example, as

it was the duty of men under the former dispensation, to worship God, and as the worship comprehended confession, thanksgiving and supplication; and as it was their duty to love their neighbor as themselves; the same must be the case now. But why? Because the change which took place had no respect to these subjects. *These duties rested on principles common to both dispensations.* Just so it is with the duty of consecrating children to God by a religious rite. This duty rests on the natural and immutable relation between parents and children, and on the general purpose and promise of God to propagate religion and perpetuate the church, by sanctifying the seed of believers. This was the divine economy formerly; and it is so now. It has as much influence now, as it formerly had. Its importance is above all conception, involving the religious character and the eternal destinies of men. Now the same token of this gracious economy, and of consecration to God, was formerly applied *to parents and to children*, and was thus applied for reasons which are common to all ages. It is plain, therefore, that the difference existing between the two dispensations cannot affect the subject before us, and that it is as suitable to apply the token of the *Christian* economy to children, as it formerly was to apply to them the token of the *Abrahamic* economy.

This course of reasoning, which is only auxiliary to the main argument, was introduced for the particular purpose of removing the difficulties which have frequently been felt in regard to Infant Baptism, on account of the change from one dispensation to another. This change, which is admitted to have been great and extensive, could not affect the propriety of consecrating children to God by a religious rite, for the plain reason, that it did not affect the principle on which such consecration rests. Though it affected the *form* of consecration, it did not affect the propriety of consecrating *children;* because the Christian economy, of which baptism is the seal, as properly relates to children, as that economy of which circumcision was the seal. Consequently no reason against Infant Baptism can arise from the difference between the Christian and the Abrahamic economy.

The requisition of faith in order to baptism, may be thought to be a proof, that the application of baptism was meant to be more limited, than that of circumcision. But of whom was faith required in order to baptism? Of those, evidently, who were capable of understanding the nature of the requisition. The command to believe could relate to no other. This was so perfectly obvious, that no teacher of Christianity could have any occasion to mention it. This command, or any other command, coming from a just God, must be understood as relating to those only, who were capable of complying with it. So that the fact, stated exactly, was this; *those who were capable of believing*, that is, *adult persons*, *were required to believe in order to be baptized*. A requisition not unlike this, was made under the former dispensation. Adult persons, in order to be admitted by circumcision into the society of God's people, were required to renounce idolatry, to believe in the God of Abraham, and to submit to the institutions and laws which he gave by Moses. Such faith as this, under the *Mosaic* economy, answered to the faith which is required under the *Christian* economy. The requisition of faith, then, in order to baptism, has nothing new in it, but this, that the faith required is to be adapted to the circumstances of the Christian dispensation; whereas the faith required before, was to be adapted to the Mosaic dispensation. Thus, in regard to adult persons, the case is very similar under both dispensations. How then can the fact, that Christ required adult persons to believe in order to be baptized, prove that baptism was to be more limited in its application than circumcision?

But it is said, that *the circumcision of children was expressly commanded*, and that, without this command, no one could have inferred from the institution of circumcision for *adults*, that *children* were to be circumcised. I grant, that an express command may have been necessary *at first*, to authorize the application of the seal of the covenant to children. And if baptism had been the first seal, such a command might have been necessary in relation to this. But the principle having been once established, *that the seal of the covenant is to be applied to children*, there can be no

occasion for the repetition of a divine command to justify an adherence to that principle. In respect to circumcision, an express command was given; because circumcision was the *first* rite which was appointed to be the seal of God's covenant. Had *baptism* been the first seal, and had *Infant* Baptism been settled by divine command, as infant circumcision was; and had the practice of God's people been for ages conformed to it; and had circumcision been then introduced in the place of baptism, as the seal of the Christian covenant; who will say that a new command would have been necessary to authorize the circumcision of infants? But, on the other hand, if so great a change was to be made, as the *withholding* of the seal of the covenant from the seed of believers; *such* a change would surely require to be authorized by a new divine command.

If any one still thinks, that Christ's requiring men to believe and be baptized, implies that infants are not to be baptized, because they cannot believe; I ask whether the same mode of interpreting Scripture would not debar infants from *salvation*. "He that believeth shall be *saved*, and he that believeth not shall be condemned," is the grand principle of the New Testament. Faith is required in order to *salvation* as much, certainly, as in order to *baptism*. And this requisition furnishes as much reason for excluding infants from *salvation*, as for excluding them from *baptism*. But all Christians are united in holding, that the requisition of faith in order to *salvation*, cannot be applied to children. And to be consistent, they must hold, that the requisition of faith in order to *baptism* cannot be applied to children. The requisition most evidently has as much to do with *salvation* as with *baptism*. The two cases then are alike. Christ requires men to believe, in order to be *saved*. But when he requires this, he does not say, *that infants are excluded from salvation, because they cannot believe*. So he requires faith in order *to baptism*. But he does not say, that *infants* are excluded from baptism, because they cannot believe. Thus so far as the requisition of faith is concerned, there is no more propriety in excluding infants from *baptism*, than in excluding them from *salvation*. And if we admit

that, notwithstanding this requisition of faith, infants may be *saved;* we must admit, also, that they may be *baptized.* The requisition of faith, which is intended only for adults, proves nothing one way or the other, as to children. The question of their being *baptized*, or *saved*, must be determined on other grounds. We ask not whether they *believe;* for this they cannot do; but, whether there are *other* reasons for baptizing them, and *other* reasons for thinking they may be saved.

The same principle may be satisfactorily illustrated by 2 Thess. 3: 10. The Apostle says; "This we commanded, that if *any one* would not work, neither should he eat." But who ever understood this command as relating to children?

The command to *believe and be baptized*, which has now been considered, is the most plausible argument ever advanced against Infant Baptism. And, if I mistake not, our opponents rely upon it more than upon any other. But they ought well to consider, that the mode of reasoning which they adopt, would exclude all infants from salvation. And they certainly have good reason to pause, before they admit the conclusiveness of an argument, which would lead to such fearful consequences.

The import of Infant Baptism may be understood from the preceding discussion. Circumcision was the seal of God's covenant with Abraham and his offspring; that is, of his gracious design and promise respecting them. This design and promise was, in brief, that he would be their God. Circumcision signified, that such was the promise of God, — such the plan of administration he had fixed upon towards Abraham and his seed. And it manifestly implied, that there were obligations on their part, to love, worship and obey him, who promised to be their God. Thus it was a seal of God's promise to them, and of their obligations to him. But it was never intended to signify, that all to whom it was applied, were actually, at the time, intelligent worshippers and servants of God. In regard to infant children, this was impossible. But the rite did signify, that, in process of time, they would be under high *obligations* to worship and serve God, and that he would pursue a course

of conduct towards them, which would be suited to influence them to this. As to those, who had attained to mature understanding, and were voluntary in receiving the rite of circumcision, it signified their readiness to accept the good promised, and to perform the duties required. In them it was an indication of right feeling; *a profession of piety.* But it became so, not as the direct and necessary import of the rite, but from their voluntary agency in its application. So far as circumcision was concerned, this view of the subject must be admitted by all to be correct. And why not in regard to baptism? The divine economy, though circumstantially different, is the same in substance now, as before the coming of Christ, — the same, most evidently, so far as relates to the connection between parents and children and the high interests which that connection involves. When this Christian rite is applied to *believers*, it is a seal of the new dispensation towards them. And it signifies their consent to this economy; their belief of its truths, and their readiness to receive its blessings, and comply with its obligations. But it comes to signify this, and so to be a *profession of piety*, not as the direct and necessary import of baptism, but from the fact, that it is applied to those, who have a voluntary agency in receiving it. Its general import, as a token of God's gracious economy, is as consistent with its being applied to children, as to men. Its particular import varies with the state and circumstances of those to whom it is applied.

Baptism by water may always be considered as signifying, that those, to whom it is applied, are the subjects of moral pollution, and need that spiritual cleansing, or purification from sin, which is effected by the Holy Spirit through the blood of Christ. When adult believers receive baptism themselves, they hereby express their belief, that they are by nature polluted with sin, and must be sanctified by the Spirit of God in order to be admitted into heaven; and they express their desire for such sanctification, and their determination to seek after it, in the diligent use of all appointed means. When we present our infant children for baptism, we express our belief, that *they* are the subjects of moral

pollution, and must be born of the Spirit in order to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven; and we express our earnest desire that they may experience this spiritual renovation, and our solemn determination to labor to promote it by fervent prayer to God, and by faithful attention to all the duties of Christian parents. This seems to me a perfectly natural and satisfactory view of what is signified by the baptism of children. The use of water in this Christian rite is indeed a token of *spiritual cleansing;* not always however as a thing actually accomplished, but as a thing which is absolutely necessary. Whether we are concerned in the baptism of children as ministers of the gospel, or as members of the church, we do, by this public token, express our belief, that spiritual purification is indispensably necessary for the children who are baptized, and our determination and engagement to do whatever belongs to us, for the accomplishment of that important end. And it is of great consequence to the interests of religion, that this obvious import of Infant Baptism should be often set forth, and that the obligations of parents and churches should be often explained and inculcated, especially at the time of the baptism.

"Infant baptism contains a constant memorial of *original sin.* —Of the *corruption of our nature* being not merely contracted but *inherent.* And this doctrine of original corruption, of which Infant Baptism is a standing practical recognition, is one of fundamental importance; one, I am satisfied, to inadequate conceptions and impressions of which may be traced all the principal perversions of the gospel. In proportion to its relative importance in the system of Divine truth, is it of consequence that it should not be allowed to slip out of mind. The baptism of every child brings it to view, and impresses it. If in any case it should be otherwise, the fault is not in the ordinance, but in the power of custom, and in the stupidity and carelessness of spectators, of parents, of ministers. It teaches, very simply, but very significantly, that, even from the womb, children are the subjects of pollution; that they stand in need. . . . . of purification from the inherent depravity of their nature, in order to their entering heaven."

"Whilst Infant Baptism reminds us of the humbling doctrine of original depravity, it brings before our minds a truth of a different kind, — eminently cheering and encouraging, — namely, that little children are not incapable of being subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, and participating in its blessings. I need not set about proving this; because their capability is granted by Baptists themselves." *

Offering up our children in baptism, according to the Christian formula, implies an open and solemn profession that we ourselves receive, with cordial faith, what the Scriptures reveal respecting God, and that we dedicate our children to him, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with earnest desires that he would be their God, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier.

The *utility* of positive institutions consists, generally, in the moral influence they exert upon us; in their adaptedness to promote good affections, and to excite us to the diligent performance of duty. Now there is no institution of religion, which is more evidently suited to have a salutary influence, than this. When we consecrate our children to God in baptism, we have our eyes turned directly to that glorious Being, to whom we and our offspring belong, and we are made to feel the perfect reasonableness of such a consecration. We look to God's holy and merciful economy, of which baptism is the appointed token, and are impressed with the divine condescension and goodness manifested in it, and the invaluable blessings resulting from it. The transaction is public, and on this account is likely to excite in us a more constant recollection of the sacred obligations which bind us as parents, and greater diligence in performing the duties we owe to our children.

For the truth of these remarks, I make my appeal to thousands of pious parents. They well know how their hearts have been affected with the love of God, and the interests of the soul, while they have been engaged in consecrating their children to God in baptism; how earnestly they have longed and prayed for their

* Wardlaw's Dessertation.

salvation; what resolutions they have made to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and how sensible the effect of this transaction has been upon them afterwards. The view they have taken of God's gracious promises and administration proves a mighty encouragement to earnest endeavors and prayers for the good of their children. If, for a time, their endeavors and prayers seem to have little or no effect; still they are not disheartened. They look upon their children, as having been placed under that gracious economy, in which God says to them, *I will be your God and the God of your seed.* They remember with what glorious success he has crowned the persevering endeavors of pious parents, and how frequently he has done this, after many years have passed away in sorrowful disappointment. Their confidence in the merciful covenant of God, which has been sealed to them and their children by the sacred rite of baptism, bears them above discouragement, and inspires a cheering, steadfast hope of the salvation of their offspring. Now it is evident, that all the effect which this public and sacred rite produces upon pious parents; this deep impression of their obligations; this excitement of their good affections; their faithful endeavors, and their fervent, persevering prayers, turn directly to the benefit of their children. We are not to look at the mere baptism of a little child, and to confine our thoughts to the act itself, or to the present effect of it upon the child. We must view this transaction in all its relations and consequences. We must consider, that the child is a rational, immortal being, just entered on his probationary state; that his eternal happiness depends on the formation of a virtuous and holy character; and that his character depends, in a great measure, on the circumstances in which he is placed, and the moral causes which act upon him, in the first periods of his existence. We must then consider that the child, who is baptized in a manner correspondent with the spirit of the institution, is, at the very commencement of his being, brought into circumstances highly auspicious; that he is placed under a divine economy, which secures to him the affections and prayers of parents and other Christians, and which distils upon childhood and youth

the dews of divine grace. He is brought into a near connection with the church. He is placed in the school of Christ, where he is to receive faithful instruction and discipline, and to be trained to holy worship and obedience. The child, who is offered up in baptism by devout parents and a devout church, is placed in these circumstances, and is entitled to these privileges; the substance of which is, a faithful, Christian education, accompanied with prayer and the divine blessing. All this is signified by baptism. The design of the transaction evidently is, to produce a moral effect upon parents and children; upon parents *directly*, and upon children as a *consequence*.

It would avail little to say, in the way of objection, that parents would be under all these obligations, and would have sufficient motives to faithfulness, without such an ordinance as baptism. The obvious design of baptism is, to cause these obligations to be felt *more deeply* and *constantly*, than they would otherwise be, and to give *greater efficacy* to these motives, than they would otherwise have. The influence of public rites and observances has been acknowledged in all ages, both in civil and religious concerns. In our own country, and in other countries, they are kept up, in order to perpetuate the principles of civil government. Among the Israelites, they were established for the purpose of giving to one generation after another, a knowledge and a lively impression of the principles and laws of their religion. The human mind is so constituted, that it is very doubtful whether the truths of religion could be inculcated and impressed with the necessary efficacy, without the help of public rites and observances. The utility of the Lord's Supper, which is generally acknowledged to be great, rests on the very same principle, as that which gives importance to Infant Baptism. Thus it was also with the utility of the passover and circumcision. And we may as well say, that the principles of religion might have been effectually taught and impressed, and transmitted from one generation to another among the posterity of Abraham, without the passover or circumcision, or any of their sacred rites; and that the principles of the Christian religion might be effectually taught and impressed, and its

motives rendered sufficiently powerful, without the Lord's Supper, as to say that the influence of Infant Baptism is unnecessary, and that parents will be as likely to feel their obligations and attend to their duties without it, as with it. The experience of the whole world is in favor of visible signs and tokens, of public rites and observances. The human mind requires them, as means of inculcating moral and religious truth. To undervalue them would be a discredit to our understanding; and to neglect them, an injury to our moral feelings.

But suffer me here to say, that the utility of Infant Baptism cannot be measured, by the influence which it has actually exerted upon the generality of Christians. For what sacred institution, and what divine truth, has not fallen short of the influence which it ought to have upon the conduct of men? The question is, what effect is Infant Baptism *designed* and *adapted* to produce? What has been its influence upon those parents, whose minds have been in the best state; whose parental affection has been most highly sanctified, and whose piety, most active? And what will be its influence, when the great body of Christians shall come to be fully awake to the interests of religion, and shall make it the constant object of their solicitude and labors and prayers, that their offspring from one generation to another, may become children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven? The value of this sacred rite taken in connection with the divine economy of which it is the sign, and with the obligations of parents and churches which it is intended to enforce, cannot be perfectly known, before the present low state of religious feeling among Christians shall give place to a more elevated piety, and to more constant and more faithful exertion to promote the welfare of the rising generation. In my apprehension, it is chiefly to be attributed to the unfaithfulness of parents and churches, and their failing to act according to the spirit of this divine ordinance, that it has so far fallen into disrepute, and that any can feel themselves justified in saying, *it is of no use.*

There is still another way, in which children may experience the salutary effect of baptism. When they come to adult years

they may be induced to attend to the duties of religion, by means of the baptism which they received in infancy. As soon as a child of ours becomes capable of being influenced by rational considerations; we may address him in such a manner as this: *In your infancy, we devoted you to the service of your Creator and Redeemer; and we put upon you the mark of discipleship, the mark of that gracious economy under which you were placed by your birth. In that transaction, we bound ourselves to bring you up for God, and to seek diligently your eternal happiness. As you are now come to years of understanding, you are bound to devote yourself to God, and by your own act, to confirm what your parents did for you in your infancy.* The child may be taught, that there is nothing so conducive to his highest interest, as for him to choose the God of his parents for *his* God. It may be inculcated upon him, that, by neglecting his soul, and living in sin, he will be guilty of casting contempt on the pious solicitude, the exertions and prayers of his parents; on the sacred ordinance by which he was consecrated to the service of Christ, and on all the obligations laid upon him, and all the privileges secured to him, by such an early consecration. If a youth, who was devoted to God by baptism in infancy, possesses even an ordinary degree of moral sensibility; considerations like these must produce a powerful effect upon him, and, through the divine blessing, may prove the means of his salvation.

The view which I have taken of this subject is, you perceive, very different from that which was entertained by some of the early Christian fathers, and by the Roman Catholic church. They attribute to baptism itself an *inherent saving efficacy.* They suppose that it directly conveys grace and salvation to the soul, and that, without it, no one can be saved. But I have represented the utility and efficacy of Infant Baptism, as consisting primarily in the influence it has upon the feelings and conduct of parents; and then, secondarily, in the effect which parental instruction, example and prayer, with the divine blessing, produce upon children. This effect I have considered as resulting from God's gracious economy; that is, his appointment and promise.

And I have referred and always would refer to facts which occur in the course of divine providence, as proof of the correctness of these representations. These facts are striking and momentous, and deserve to be contemplated again and again with the liveliest interest. Behold the mighty influence of parental character and instruction! How is it that pagan idolatry, Jewish infidelity, and the violent superstition of Mohammed are continued in the world, and transmitted from one generation to another? What is it which leads us to expect, that according to the common course of events, the children of pagans will be pagans, and that the children of Mohammedans will be Mohammedans, and the children of Jews, Jews? It is the general principle, that the character of children is formed by parental influence. And is not this as true in regard to Christians, as in regard to any other class of men? In ordinary cases, the children of faithful Christian parents will be Christians; and they will become so, by means of the influence which their parents exert upon them. Such is the divine economy. That children are placed under it is signified by baptism. And the application of baptism to children is a suitable expression of the piety of parents, and of their love to the souls of their offspring, and is a powerful means of exciting them to recollect and feel their obligations, and to be active and persevering in the performance of parental duties. And when the piety and diligence of parents shall rise to a proper height, and they shall address themselves to the duties, which they owe to their children, with united zeal and prayer; the true import of Infant Baptism will be more fully understood, and its utility acknowledged with more fervent gratitude to God.

Relation of baptized children to the church.

This relation of children to the church is generally represented by the most respectable authors as *infant membership*. In a very important, though in a qualified sense, baptized children are to be considered as members of the Christian church; just as formerly the children of the Priest were *members* of the *Priesthood;* and as now, all children that are born here are considered as members of our civil community, entitled to enjoy, as far as they

are capable, the benefits of society, and in due time to become *complete* and *active* members. But we cannot regard infant children as members of the church in the full and complete sense in which adult believers are members; for of this they are manifestly incapable. Nor can it be implied, that baptized children can ever become members of the church in this complete sense, on any lower terms, than those which are prescribed for others. They can sustain this high relation only on the condition of their exhibiting the character of Christian piety. Still it is clear that baptized children are placed in a real and very endearing relation to the church. And although they are not at present capable of being members in the full and active sense; they are evidently capable even now of enjoying some of the previous benefits resulting from their condition as children of the church; and they will be more and more capable of enjoying these benefits as they advance in age; and at length, unless their own impenitence and wickedness prevent, they will become complete and active members of the church. Such is the design of the economy under which they are placed; such the end of their being consecrated to God, and placed in the school of the church. And we may hope that, through divine mercy, this will ordinarily be the happy result.

To avoid as far as may be the difficulties which attend this subject, we must consider the relation of baptized children to the church to be such, and only such, as they are capable of sustaining. At first, they are merely *children of the church;* that is, children of those who are members of the church. The privileges which belong to them at this period are chiefly prospective. After they become capable of receiving instruction, they stand in the relation of *catechumens*, — young persons who are in a course of discipline and training for the service of Christ. Here the advantages of their condition begin to appear. As children consecrated to God, they are brought under a system of means suited in the highest degree to promote their salvation. If through the divine blessing these means prove effectual, they become devoted servants of Christ, and complete members in due form of

his spiritual kingdom; that is; they come to be just what it was intended in their baptism that they should be. Thus the relation of baptized children to the church is not an imaginary or unintelligible relation, but one which is *real* and *obvious*, and which secures to them the privileges of that gracious dispensation under which they are placed, and gives them a special prospect of obtaining its spiritual and eternal blessings.

The views I have advanced are in accordance with the belief of the Puritan churches of New England from the beginning. I shall select a few passages from the works of the earlier and later Puritans to show this. In 1643 the elders of the several churches of New England spoke thus; "Infants with us are admitted members in and with their parents, so as to be admitted to all church privileges of which infants are *capable*." They add; "We fully approve the practice of the reform churches, among whom it is the manner to admit children, baptized in their infancy, to the Lord's table, by public *profession of their faith* and entering into covenant." The same is asserted in the Cambridge Platform. — "The like trial," that is, a trial of their Christian character," is to be required from such members of the church as were born in the same, or received their membership and were baptized in their infancy or minority, — when being grown up unto years of discretion, they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lord's Supper; unto which, because holy things must not be given to the unworthy, therefore it is requisite that *these as well* as *others* should come to their *trial* and *examination* and *manifest* their *faith* and *repentance* by an open profession thereof, before they are admitted to the Lord's Supper; and otherwise not to be admitted. Yet these church members that were so born, or received in their childhood, before they are capable of being made partakers of the communion, have many privileges which others have not; they are in covenant with God, and have the seal thereof upon them, namely, baptism; and so if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the covenant and the seal; they are also under church watch, and consequently

subject to the reprehensions, admonitions and censures thereof, for their healing and amendment as need shall require."

Shepard of Cambridge says; "Hereby God gives parents some comfortable hope of their children's salvation, because they are within the pale of the visible church." And he thinks pious parents have no reason to doubt that God will save their children, if they die in infancy, or that he will do them good if they live. The Synod of 1662 also held that the children of believers are members of the visible church; but that they are "not to be admitted to full communion without such further qualifications as the word of God requires." Edwards considered baptized children to be truly members of the church, but not in complete standing, unless they become by profession and in the judgment of the church *godly* or *gracious* persons.

It was then the general belief of the early Puritans of New England, and is now the general belief of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, that baptized children are really, in a qualified sense, members of the church, but that they are not to be considered as complete and active members, entitled to full communion and to baptism for their offspring, before they give evidence that they possess repentance for sin and faith in Jesus Christ.

Duties of parents and the church towards baptized children.

On this subject, which is of the highest practical importance, my remarks must be very summary.

When we dedicate our infant children to God in baptism, we should consider them as rational and moral beings just commencing an endless existence. Instead of confining our thoughts to their bodily wants and their earthly interests, we should direct our attention chiefly to the worth of their immortal souls, to the state of moral degeneracy and ruin into which they are brought by their natural birth, and to the grace of God which has provided deliverance and salvation for them; and then we should draw near to the God of mercy with strong desire and fervent prayer, beseeching him that these dear children, who are destined to live forever in heaven, or in hell, may inherit the blessings of the everlasting covenant; and that in the morning of their exis-

tence, they may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In this solemn transaction we should consecrate ourselves anew to the service of God, and resolve humbly, but firmly, to be faithful to our children.

The general duty of parents and of the church, is the same; namely; such a course of pious instruction and discipline, such an example of holiness, and such fervent prayer both in public and private, as are suited to promote the salvation of the rising age, and to transmit the Christian religion, with all its institutions and blessings to future generations. This duty belongs primarily to parents. And the church is to seek the good of the children chiefly through the faithfulness and piety of the parents. In every thing which is important to the children, the parents are to take the lead. But their pious efforts are to be encouraged and sustained by the whole body of Christians with whom they are associated. These are all under obligation to cherish a lively interest in baptized children, and with unwearied diligence to labor for their good; always looking to God for those spiritual blessings which result from his gracious covenant.

It is impossible for me, in this place, to give a particular enumeration of the methods, which ought to be pursued by parents and by the church, for the welfare of children. I shall only say, that our benevolent efforts are to be made in various ways, and to be continued so long as there is any hope of success. And why should we abandon such a hope, while the life of our children continues?

On the question, whether the church ought in any case, to cut off those, who give evidence of determined impiety, by a public act, there have been various opinions. That view of the subject which I have found the most satisfactory, is briefly as follows. The church is to join with parents in administering instruction, admonition and warning to children and youth in the most discreet, affectionate, and faithful manner; and to do this perseveringly. In judging of the reasons which ought to encourage us to exertion, we are not to attend chiefly to present appearances; but are to consider the forbearance and long suffering of

God, and the multiplied instances in which his grace has visited those who had long lived in sin, and who, in human apprehension, had been fitted for destruction. And if those who have been devoted to God in baptism, wander far and long from the path of duty, and show fearful symptoms of obduracy; we are not quickly to despair of their salvation, but are to follow them with every effort which the sincerest love can dictate. And when no other effort seems to promise any good, we are to abound in prayer, relying on the infinite grace of God, and earnestly hoping that our prayers will prevail, and that our children will at length be persuaded to consider their ways and turn to the Lord.

It is, in my view, utterly inexpedient to attempt to fix upon any particular age, at which those who were baptized in infancy, and who exhibit no evidence of piety, are to be abandoned by the church, as those for whom no further efforts ought to be made. For suppose you fix upon the age of eighteen, or twenty, or twenty-one: who can be sure that a youth at that age, though without any evidence of regeneration, may not be in a state of mind, which is more susceptible of good impressions, and which affords more hope of salvation, than at any period of his life before? Now if any person should be in this state, and the church should adopt a principle like what I have referred to; they must forthwith exclude such a person from all the advantages of their Christian friendship; and they must do this at the very time, when those advantages would be most highly prized. How directly would such a principle oppose all the feelings of Christian benevolence and compassion! And what havoc would it make of the interests of the soul!

To conclude. The day of Zion's glory draws near. And when that happy day arrives, a clearer light will shine upon the minds of God's people, as to the principles and rites of Christianity. The duties of parents to their children will be more correctly understood, and more diligently and successfully performed. Division and strife will cease; and those who love the Lord Jesus Christ will be of one mind. The shortest and best way, therefore, to solve our doubts, and settle our differences, is, to labor

unitedly and earnestly to hasten the arrival of that blessed day, when a brighter sun will arise upon the church and chase away all the shades of night. Then Christians, having a more perfect illumination, and being united in judgment and feeling, will more justly prize the blessings of the Christian economy, and will combine their prayers and efforts to transmit those blessings from one generation to another, and to promote the increasing and perpetual prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

LECTURE CXVIII.

FORM OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM. CLOSING REMARKS.

THE subject of *Infant* Baptism has no necessary connection with the *mode* of Baptism. Christians who baptize by immersion, as well as those who baptize in other ways, may apply baptism to infants, and in numberless instances have done it. While, on the other hand, those who administer baptism by sprinkling, as well as those who use immersion, may confine it to believers. If we were now convinced, that immersion is the only proper mode, it would make no difference in our belief, as to the duty of Infant Baptism.

In this Lecture, I propose to suggest, under two propositions, the principal thoughts which have occurred to me on the manner of performing this rite.

FIRST. *It cannot be certainly determined from the New Testament, that baptism was administered by immersion.*

What declaration is there in the New Testament, that every one who was baptized was *completely immersed* in water? And what command is there of Christ or his apostles, expressly requiring that Christians should be baptized by *total immersion?* The manner of various purifications and other rites, under the Mosaic economy, *was exactly described;* and thus it was made evident, that God would have those rites executed in *one precise form.* But the particular manner of administering baptism is nowhere described.

It cannot be certainly determined, that total immersion was the only mode of baptism from the signification of *βαπτίζω,* and the nouns derived from it.

Though it might be supposed that *βαπτίζω*, being a derivative from *βάπτω*, would have a less definite and forcible meaning than the original; they seem to be often used in the same sense. But a total immersion is not necessarily signified by either. This is perfectly evident from the New Testament. First, as to *βάπτω*, Matt. 26: 23. "He that *dippeth his hand* with me in the dish;" *ἐμβάψας—τὴν χεῖρα*. Mark has it, *ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος*, "*he* that dippeth with me in the dish." Now whatever liquid the dish contained, it cannot be supposed, that Judas plunged his hand all over in that liquid. Nothing more can be meant, than that he took the bitter herbs which were eaten at the Passover, or other articles of food, and with his fingers dipped them in the sauce prepared. And yet it is said by Matthew, that Judas *dipped his hand*, and by Mark, that *he himself dipped* in the dish. And as to *βαπτίζω, baptize;* — the word does indeed signify to *immerse* or *dip in water;* but it also signifies to *wash*, and to wash in different ways. It is said, 1 Cor. 10: 2, that the Israelites were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." This does not mean that they were plunged or immersed in the cloud or the sea — for they went through "on dry ground." The most that can be intended by the expression is, that they were sprinkled or wet from the cloud or from the spray of the sea as they passed through. The Apostle however had a moral or spiritual meaning, as I shall notice soon. "Divers washings" are mentioned Heb. 9: 10. The original is *διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς, divers baptisms*. These were not all performed in one way; and certainly not by *immersion*. The adjectvie *διάφορος* signifies *different, of various kinds, dissimilar;* as in Rom. 12: 6. The divers baptisms or ablutions, mentioned Heb. 9: 10, doubtless included all the different ablutions, or ceremonial cleansings prescribed in the Mosaic law. These were performed in different ways, but chiefly by *sprinkling consecrated water*. The word *βαπτίσμος, baptism*, is used with great latitude of signification in Mark 7: 4. The Evangelist says, the Pharisees hold many other usages, "as the baptism of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and *beds or couches*." The common version has *tables*. But the word *κλίνη* uniformly signifies a *couch*

to sleep on, or to recline upon at meals. Now the *baptism*, or ceremonial purification of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and *couches*, were doubtless performed in different ways. Cups and pots and brazen vessels might possibly be *immersed all over in water;* though this is not probable. But to suppose that *beds*, or *couches*, were immersed in the same way would be unreasonable, especially since one of the prescribed modes of ceremonial purification, and indeed the most common mode, was, *the sprinkling of consecrated water*.

Since then it appears, that *βαπτίσμος*, *baptism*, when used to denote ceremonial purification, did not by any means signify immersion exclusively, and generally signified other modes of purification; why should we suppose that the word *βαπτίζω*, always signifies *to immerse* when used to denote a Christian rite? If baptism was performed in different ways under the former dispensation; how can we determine, merely from the use of the word, that it is not to be performed in different ways under the present dispensation? What is there in the Christian religion which would prevent a word from being used with as much latitude of signification, as it was under the Mosaic economy?

And even if *βαπτίζω* always signified *to dip* or *immerse all over in water*, when applied to other subjects, — which is not the case, — it would by no means follow that it has this signification, when applied to the Christian rite of *baptism*. There may be sufficient reasons, why a religious rite, though denoted by a word in common use, should not be performed in a manner exactly in conformity with the common signification of that word. This we well know is the case with the word which denotes the other Christian ordinance. The word *Supper* in English, and *δεῖπνον* in Greek, have a very different sense when applied to that institution, from what they have in ordinary cases. Eating a *morsel* of *bread* does not constitute a *supper*, a *principal meal*, although this last is the common signification of *δεῖπνον*. But in this religious rite, *eating a small morsel of bread* is called a *Supper*. 1 Cor. 11: 20. And the Apostle charged the Corinthians with abusing the ordinance, because they made use of more food, than the design of the ordi-

nance required. Now if the word which denotes one Christian rite, has a sense so widely different from its usual sense; why may it not be so with the word, which denotes the other Christian rite? As *δεῖπνον*, in reference to one rite, signifies not a usual meal, but only a *very small quantity of bread;* why may not *βαπτίζω*, in reference to the other rite, signify, not a complete dipping or washing, but the application of water in *a small degree?* This would present the two institutions in the same light. In the first; as bread and wine are used, not to nourish and invigorate the body, but, as mere symbols, for spiritual purposes, or, as signs of spiritual blessings; a very small quantity is sufficient. Indeed the Apostle decides, that a small quantity is better suited to the ends of the institution, than a larger quantity. So in the other; as water is used, not to cleanse the body, but merely as a *sign* of *spiritual* purification, a small quantity of water is sufficient; — as sufficient for the purposes of this ordinance, as a small quantity of bread and wine is for the purposes of the other. The nourishment of the body in the one case, and the cleansing of it in the other, being no part of the end to be answered; a large quantity either of bread or of water can be of no use.

I shall now endeavor to show, that *the circumstances*, which attended the several instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, do not prove that immersion is either the only mode, or the most proper and scriptural mode.

The circumstance mentioned John 3: 23, does not prove this. "John was baptizing in Ænon, *because there was much water there.*" In such a country as Palestine, John found it of special importance, (as any Christian missionary would at the present day,) to collect the multitude of people who resorted to him for instruction and baptism, in a place, where there was an abundant supply of water. This he knew to be necessary for their accommodation, and even their comfortable subsistence. So that there is not the least need of supposing, that the mention of much water, or many springs or streams of water, *ὕδατα πολλά*, had any reference to the particular mode of baptism. Whatever the mode might have been, a large supply of water was indispensable to

such a concourse of people; and such a supply could be obtained in only a few places in that country. And who can suppose the waters of Ænon were resorted to for the simple purpose of *baptizing*, when three thousand were, in one day, baptized by the apostles even at Jerusalem, in the driest season of the year?

That total immersion was the mode of baptism cannot be proved from the circumstance mentioned Matt. 3: 16, that Jesus, when he was baptized of John in the river Jordan, *went up straightway out of the water*. The preposition ἀπό generally signifies *from*. "He went up *from* the water;" — an expression perfectly natural and proper, on supposition that he had only gone into the river where the water was a few inches deep, or that he had gone merely to the edge of the river, without stepping into the water at all. It will be kept in mind, that the river Jordan had banks of considerable height above the water, except when it was so swollen by the melted snows of Antilibanus, as to fill its upper channel. Of course, Jesus must have *ascended*, or *gone up an ascent*, when he left the water, whether he had been *in* the water so as to be immersed, or had been only to the margin of the water.

The same remarks may be made respecting the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8: 38. "They went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, etc." Every one acquainted with the Greek language knows, that the passage may be just as well rendered, "they descended *to* the water, and ascended *from* it." Besides, it has often been remarked that, as it is said of both Philip and the eunuch, "they went down *into* the water;" the mere circumstance of going *into* the water no more proves that the *eunuch* was immersed, than it proves that *Philip* was.

It was evident then the argument above mentioned in favor of *immersion* from the baptism of Jesus and of the Ethiopian eunuch, vanishes on the slightest examination, being founded on the mere sound of the words in the Common Version.

The circumstances attending the baptism of the jailer equally fail of proving that he was baptized by immersion. Acts 16: 19—39.

In the first place, he was baptized in the night. Secondly; he was evidently baptized in the outer prison. Paul and Silas were thrust into the inner prison or dungeon. After the earthquake, the jailer brought them out; that is, out of the dungeon, but clearly, not out of the limits of the prison. There Paul taught him and his household; and there, in all probability, he baptized them. Thirdly; after the jailer professed to believe, he was baptized *immediately*. These three circumstances, namely, his being baptized at *such a time*, *in such a place*, *and immediately* after professing to believe, are very far from proving that immersion was the mode of baptism. They rather prove the contrary. — If any one should say, there was probably a stream or fountain of water in the prison, or a bath filled with water, sufficient for baptizing by immersion; I would merely ask, what evidence he finds of this in the New Testament?

Nor can it be proved that immersion was the mode of baptism from the account given, Acts x, of the baptism of those who were converted at the house of Cornelius.

After Peter had preached, and the gentiles believed, and received the Holy Ghost; Peter said: "Can any man *forbid water* that these should not be baptized?" It is most natural to understand this to mean, *can any man forbid water to be brought?* It is far less natural to understand it to mean, *can any man forbid us to go out to a river or fountain of water?* How can this account be thought by any one to favor the idea of baptizing by immersion?

And what evidence of this mode of baptizing can be derived from the baptism of the three thousand converts, as related in Acts ii. The place of those numerous baptisms was not by the river Jordan, nor at Ænon where there was much water, but at Jerusalem. It was too on the day of Pentecost, which was about the twentieth of May. At that season, which was summer at Jerusalem, there was no rain. The brook Kidron was doubtless dry. And there was no natural fountain of water in Jerusalem, or near it, except the pool of Siloam, or Siloah. This is "the only fountain, whose waters gladdened the city." Such having

been the circumstances of the case, is there no difficulty in supposing, that the apostles found places where they could baptize three thousand in one day by immersion? All the apostles were undoubtedly engaged in baptizing at the same time. Had they baptized by immersion, they must probably have made use of separate tanks, cisterns, or bathing places in private houses. But is there no difficulty in supposing that they divided themselves into so many different companies for the purpose of administering the rite of baptism? And is there no difficulty in supposing that they had access to so many bathing places? These doubtless were confined to the houses of the more wealthy; among whom few could at any time be found at Jerusalem, who were disposed in any way to befriend the cause of Christ. And what intimation is there, that the apostles made use of such bathing places for the purpose of baptizing the three thousand converts? And what reason have we to suppose, that such a multitude, who were suddenly collected from various regions, and who, we must presume, were generally poor, had such changes of raiment, as would have been necessary for baptizing by immersion?

But there is still another difficulty. It appears exceedingly improbable, that the apostles could have baptized such a number by immersion in so short a time. Before they began to baptize, all the other business mentioned in the narrative had been accomplished. The apostles had met together in one place. The Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them; so that they declared the wonderful works of God to people of many different countries, in their own languages. The powerful effects produced by their preaching had been noticed. Heavy accusations had been brought against them. Peter had undertaken their defence, and had reasoned with them largely from the holy Scriptures. Multitudes had been pricked in their hearts, and inquired what they should do to be saved. Peter had taught them the way of salvation. What is related, Acts ii. must be considered as a very brief outline of the instruction he gave them; as appears from verse 40. Now all those miraculous operations of the Holy Ghost; all those discourses of the apostles to people of many different countries; all the agita-

tions and differences of opinion which took place among such a multitude; the discourse of Peter; the convictions and anxious inquiries of three thousand souls, with the particular instructions given them in regard to the way of salvation and the duties of a holy life, — all these must have occupied a considerable portion of the day. It was the third hour, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, when some of the people, after having seen the effects produced by the effusion of the Spirit, accused the apostles of being unduly excited by new wine. What has been mentioned could not have taken place in less than half the day; and they certainly could not have had more than half the day left for baptizing. Indeed I can hardly bring myself to believe that they devoted so much as half the day to this ritual service. But let it be supposed that they baptized three thousand in five hours. This would make six hundred an hour; and for each apostle, fifty an hour, or two hundred and fifty in five hours; that is, but little short of one a minute for each apostle, through the whole of that time. According to this calculation, who can suppose they were baptized by immersion, without supposing at the same time, that God worked wonders in this, as in other occurrences of that memorable day, and that he miraculously multiplied *the hours* and *minutes*, as he had on another occasion multiplied the *loaves and fishes?*

There are two places in the epistles, which contain allusions to the rite of baptism, and which have been thought by some to prove that immersion was the mode. Rom. 6: 3, 4. Col. 2: 12. In these texts, believers are said to be *buried with Christ in*, or *by baptism*. I remark, first, that the language is figurative. In this all are agreed. Secondly: The word συνετάφημεν, *we were buried*, does not appertain to *living* men, but to *dead* men; not to *water*, but to *earth*. It does not mean, we were *immersed*, or *plunged in water*, but, as dead bodies, we were *interred or covered up in a grave*, or *laid in a tomb*. "The Greek word, συνετάφημεν, *we were buried with him*, cannot mean *water* baptism; for in what part of the Bible is being washed or bathed in *water*, an emblem of *death* or *interment?* In the Jewish ceremonies, it is always an emblem of *purification*, not of *death*. The Baptists greatly mistake the

force of this text."* The figure of speech is the same, as in the expressions used in connection with this, in which Christians are said to be *crucified* and *dead*. It designates their character. They are *crucified to the world; dead to sin;* yea, dead and *buried*. Now this *mortified temper* of Christians, and their conformity with Christ, is signified by baptism; and equally so, whatever may be the mode of baptism. According to the representation of the Apostle in the context, it is as true that believers are *crucified* with Christ and *dead* with Christ in baptism, as that they are *buried* with him in baptism. And how does it appear from the language employed in these passages, that baptism has any more resemblance to Christ's *burial*, than to his *crucifixion* and *death?*

In Gal. 3: 27, the Apostle says; "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have *put on* Christ." Here the metaphor is taken from the putting on of clothes. Believers *have put on Christ;* have assumed his character; have *invested*, or *clothed* themselves with his moral excellence, as one covers himself with a garment. And this is signified by their being baptized into Christ. But who would ever think of inferring from this, that the *mode* of baptism must have a resemblance to *putting on clothes?* And yet this would be just as proper as to argue from the other passages, that, the mode of baptism must have a resemblance to Christ's *burial*.

After all, what resemblance is there between a man's being dipped or plunged in *water*, and Christ's being laid in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock?

The common manner of burial among us is very different from that in which Christ was buried, and may have been the occasion of misleading the judgment of common readers. There are still remaining in the neighborhood of Jerusalem many ancient tombs, which clearly show the manner of interment formerly practised. A chamber or excavation was made in a rock, and at the sides niches were formed for the reception of dead bodies. The body of Jesus was wrapped in linen and laid in one of these niches.

* Professor Stuart. See also Dr. Wardlaw's Dissertation.

Now what resemblance is there between a body's being carried, — not let *down* as *into a grave*, but *carried* into such a chamber or excavation in a rock and lying there three days in one of the niches at the side, and the plunging of a living person for a moment in water? If there is any resemblance, is it not too remote and fanciful to be regarded by an Apostle?

Let me just remark in addition, that if *circumcision* had been continued, as the seal of the covenant under the Christian dispensation; it would have been perfectly just and proper, for the Apostle to make use of the metaphors found in the passages above quoted, and to say, that Christians are *crucified* with Christ, *dead* with Christ, and *buried* with Christ in or by *circumcision;* as this, according to the supposition, would have been the appointed sign of their being thus *crucified*, *dead* and *buried* in a spiritual sense.

The obvious design of the Apostle is to illustrate the character and obligations of believers from the circumstance, that they are, in a certain respect, conformed to Christ's *death;* that as he died *for* sin; so they are dead, or are under obligation to be dead *to* sin; that is, they are *holy*, or are by their profession *obliged* to be holy." So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized *into his death*." This is explained by what follows. "In that Christ died, he died unto sin (or on account of sin,) once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. *Likewise* reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead indeed unto sin*, (or in respect to sin,) but *alive unto God through Jesus Christ*." This is what was signified by *baptism*. And so believers were baptized *into Christ's death;* not that baptism was a *symbol* of death, or the state of the dead; for water or washing in water never was a symbol of this. But water, used in ceremonial ablutions, whether by washing or sprinkling, and afterwards in Christian baptism, always signified *purification*. Now being *dead*, or in *a state of death as to sin*, is the same thing as to be *spiritually purified*, or made *holy*. And this is the very thing that *baptism*, following the ablutions under the former economy, is exactly adapted to signify. Or to say all in a word; water used in baptism is a sign of that *moral purifica-*

tion of believers, which the Apostle means to express by their being "crucified," and dead," and conformed to Christ's "death." Their being *dead* in conformity with Christ, is the expression which contains the metaphor. And baptism, as an appointed token, or symbol, denotes what is signified by the metaphor, not the metaphor itself.

The argument which has been derived from this passage in favor of immersion is founded on the supposition of a real resemblance between *baptism* and *death*. But this supposition is very unnatural, and I think far different from what the Apostle had in view.

What has been said above as to the *obligation* implied in baptism, may be confirmed by 1 Cor. 10: 2. The Israelites "were all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Baptism, as a religious rite, was not then instituted. But the Apostle knowing the special obligation implied in baptism, makes use of the word, to set forth the obligation of the children of Israel. "They were *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." That is, in consequence of God's mercy towards them, especially at the Red Sea, they came under special obligations to obey Moses, the servant of God, or, which is the same thing, to obey the commands of God *by Moses*. Their being baptized implies, that they were brought under special obligations to worship and obey their gracious Deliverer. Baptism is here spoken of, in regard to its spiritual import, just as I understand it to be in the passages above quoted from Rom. and Col.

As to 1 Pet. 3: 21, I shall stop to make only two concise remarks. First. The Apostle here expressly tells us, that the thing he had in his mind, when he spoke of baptism, was not an *outward*, but an *inward*, *spiritual washing*. Second. The condition of Noah and his family in the ark was by no means the condition of persons *buried* or *immersed in water*. *This* was the condition of the ungodly world. It was *from* this condition, as the Apostle tells us, that those in the ark were *saved*. And this preservation from the ruin of the ungodly world he refers to, as illustrating the salvation of Christians, who have that *inward*

purification, that "*answer of a good conscience towards God*," which he tells us is what he meant by baptism.

The mistake into which many writers have been betrayed, in regard to several of the passages which speak of baptism, particularly those in Rom. vi, and Col. ii, has, in my apprehension, been owing to their not attending, with sufficient care, to the nature and design of the metaphorical language there used.

In the foregoing discussion of the mode of baptism, I have not thought it proper to suggest any particular reason for preferring *sprinkling* to *immersion*. But if we look at the ancient manner of purification and consecration established by the authority of God, we may perhaps find such a reason. It is evident that lustrations, or purifications, and consecrations under the Levitical law, were commonly performed by *sprinkling*, not by *immersion*. See Num. 8: 7. 19: 18—21. Heb. 9: 13, 19. And there are various allusions to sprinkling as the prevaling mode of ceremonial purification, as Ezek. 36: 25; "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Is. 53: 15. "So shall he *sprinkle* many nations."

Now how can a mode of baptism, which has such a resemblance to the ancient mode of purification, be otherwise than very *significant?* The early Christian Jews associated the idea of the Passover with the Lord's Supper. The sacramental bread and wine were symbols of the body and blood of Christ, whom they considered as the Paschal Lamb. 1 Cor. 5: 7. In like manner, the mode of baptism which we commonly use, may have a happy effect by being associated in our reflections with the prevailing mode of purification under the former economy, and especially by impressing our minds with that inward purification, that cleansing from sin, which is effected by the influence of the Holy Spirit. I present this view of the subject merely to show, that the mode of baptism which we adopt has a striking significancy, and that in regard to *moral effect*, which really constitutes the value of the rite, this mode is not inferior to any other.

Our Baptist brethren undertake to prove from Ecclesiastical History, that immersion was the prevailing mode of baptism in

ages subsequent to the apostles. In regard to this argument, I remark, first, that it is the only clear proof in favor of immersion, as the mode of Christian baptism. It is apparent, that no such proof can be found in the Scriptures. For the Scriptures nowhere declare, as the Ecclesiastical writers do, that baptism was performed by *immersion*. They nowhere describe the mode.

Secondly. Those who regard the testimony of Ecclesiastical History, as an argument in favor of baptizing by *immersion*, ought, to be consistent, to allow the same testimony to be an argument in favor of *Infant* Baptism. If they reject this last argument, they ought also to reject the former; as this is quite as clear and conclusive, as that.

I proceed now to my second general proposition; which is, that *Christians ought not to attach to the mode of baptism any greater importance than the Scriptures do.*

All men are in danger of attaching more importance to external rites and forms, than really belongs to them. The people of God did thus under the former dispensation; and the prophets frequently warned them against it, and told them plainly, that outward rites, though enjoined by divine authority, were of little consequence, compared with spiritual duties. Christ often found it necessary to guard his disciples against the same danger, and to teach them that obedience to the moral precepts of the law was the great thing required, and that outward observances were comparatively of but little consequence. In the time of the apostles, Christians had a zeal about the externals of religion, which proved a great hinderance to the peace and prosperity of the church; and some of them needed to be told by Paul, that *the kingdom of God consisted not in meats and drinks*, that is, in *external observances*, but in *righteousness*, and *peace*, and *joy in the Holy Ghost*. I am well satisfied, that Christians are exposed to a mistake of this kind at the present day; and exposed in a high degree, where any external rite or form is made the subject of controversy. In such a case the disputed rite is likely to occupy their thoughts too frequently; to make a deeper impression on their minds than other subjects which are inconceivably more important; and in conse-

quence of this, to pervert their judgment, to misguide their conscience, and to excite them to a warmth of feeling and effort, which exceeds the importance of the subject, and which can be justified only when directed to the high and spiritual interests of Christ's kingdom. Against such a mistake, and such excess, especially in regard to the *mode of baptism*, I would earnestly and affectionately warn the followers of Christ.

From the foregoing examination, I think it must have become evident, that no particular mode of baptism is exactly described in the New Testament, and represented as the one which believers are required to use. I would not allow myself to speak with unbecoming confidence on such a subject. But I confess I am unable to find a single text, which, according to just rules of interpretation, clearly proves, that baptism is to be administered by immersion. And the conclusion which I draw from this fact is, that if we contend for this particular mode, we go beyond our rule.

I am confirmed in this view of the subject by other considerations. Christ intended that his people should be free from inconvenient and burdensome rites, and should have no yoke put upon them, which was not easy to be borne. But scarcely anything in the Mosaic ritual was so inconvenient and burdensome, as baptism would in some circumstances be, if it could be administered in no way but by immersion. The coldness of some climates, and of some seasons of the year in more temperate climates, renders it almost impracticable to baptize in this way. Those who practise immersion find it, in some cases, exceedingly inconvenient and difficult, and submit to it merely because they think God requires it. Now I have serious doubts whether all this is consistent with the simplicity and spirituality of the Christian religion, and whether the unqualified declaration of Christ that *his yoke is easy* and *his burden light*, would lead us to expect, that an outward rite would be enjoined upon all Christians in such a form, as would render it in many cases so difficult to be complied with. And I have still stronger doubts, whether it is consistent with the genius of Christianity that baptism by immersion should be required of all be-

lievers, when I consider that the thing required must, in some places, be rendered not only difficult but impossible for want of water, and in various instances must necessarily be given up, on account of bodily infirmity.

The Christian religion was designed to be a *universal* religion, and its external rites, as well as its spiritual precepts were unquestionably adapted to this design. But the rites of Christianity, in order to be adapted to the design of making it a universal religion, must be practicable and convenient in all circumstances. An absolute, unvarying uniformity in the mode of administering either baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or in the mode of performing public worship, would operate as a hinderance to the spread of the gospel. As to public worship, we never think of such uniformity, but vary in regard to external forms, just as the ends of public worship seem to require. And we feel that we have the same liberty in regard to the Lord's Supper. As to the exterior of this solemn rite, we depart greatly from the original pattern.

I have often thought it strange that Christians of the Baptist denomination should feel themselves authorized to take such liberties as they do, respecting the manner of observing the ordinance of the Supper, while they plead for so strict a conformity to what they conceive to have been the original mode of baptism. Why are they not as much bound to a strict conformity in regard to one ordinance, as in regard to the other? But do they practise such conformity as to the eucharist? Do they practise it in respect to the *time?* They do indeed observe this ordinance near the close of the day, so that it may seem to be a *Supper*. But Christ kept the Passover with his disciples *in the night*, that is, after it was dark, and at the close of the Passover instituted the Supper. The Baptists conform in this respect as far as they can consistently with convenience. But do they not perceive that the plea of convenience is as good in regard to one ordinance, as in regard to the other? Christ and his apostles kept the sacramental Supper in an *upper chamber*. But who at the present day thinks it necessary to conform in this respect? Christ and his apostles *reclined* at the table on a *couch* or *sofa*. And why do not the

Baptists imitate them in this respect? Because, at the present day, it would not be agreeable to common usage, so it would not be *suitable* or *decent*. And doubtless this plea of *suitableness* and *decency* has weight. And why has it not as much weight in regard to baptism, as in regard to the Lord's Supper? The bread which Christ brake and gave to his disciples, was *unleavened*. And why do not the *Baptists* use unleavened bread? Because they do not think an exact conformity in this respect is either *necessary* or *important*. The wine which Christ and his disciples used was the *pure* juice of the grape. And why do not the Baptists conform to Christ's example in his respect? Because it is difficult to procure such wine. Now the Baptists take the liberty, and I doubt not very properly, to vary from what they believe to have been the *mode* of the original institution and the example of Christ, in all these respects. And yet, did he not do as much at least to enjoin an exact conformity in regard to this ordinance, as in regard to baptism?

I shall just refer to another subject, on which our Baptist brethren agree with us, and which, in my view, they treat according to the will of Christ. After he had, with the most condescending, amiable kindness, washed the feet of his disciples, he commanded them to *wash one another's feet*. This command of Christ was as express, and for aught that appears in the form of the command itself, as much intended for all his followers, as the command to baptize, or to eat the sacramental Supper. And yet the Baptists, as well as we, dispense with a *literal* observance of it, and content themselves with obeying it *virtually;* that is, with performing acts of condescension and brotherly kindness. And to justify themselves in this, they plead that present usages are different from what they were when the command was given; that what was then an act of kindness would not be so now; that our Lord and Master would not have us violate the common customs and civilities of social intercourse, for the sake of conforming to the *letter* of such a precept; and that the duty required is a conformity to the spirit of the command in doing acts of condescension and love.

Of the propriety of treating the command of Christ here referred to, in this manner, I am fully satisfied. Taking into consideration the changes which have taken place in the circumstances and usages of society, and exercising judgment and discretion in putting a reasonable construction on the command, and in complying with the *spirit* instead of the *letter* of it, we act, I believe, in conformity with the mind of Christ. The principles on which we proceed in all this are evidently right. And why should we not proceed on the same general principles as to baptism? Even if it could be determined that baptism was at first administered by immersion, though I think this can by no means be determined; still might not a regard to common *usage*, to *decency*, or to *convenience* be a sufficient reason for varying the mode? Might not compassion for those believers, who are in a state of infirmity, be a sufficient reason for exempting them from an exposure, which they cannot bear, and baptizing them in a manner suited to their circumstances? And why should not the Baptists content themselves in this case as well as in the other just mentioned, with conforming to the original institution *virtually*, though not *literally* and *exactly?* I say this, even on the supposition, that immersion was evidently the form of baptism in the time of Christ and his apostles. But this supposition, as I have said, wants proof. And accordingly the reason in favor of baptizing by sprinkling is, to my mind, strong and conclusive. And it is very clear, that when the Baptists fix upon immersion as the only proper mode, and refuse to vary from this in any circumstances; they abandon the just and reasonable principles which they adopt in regard to the Lord's Supper, and in regard to his command to wash one another's feet; and they debar from baptism some Christians, who are qualified for the ordinance, and desirous of receiving it.

There is another consideration relative to the subject before us, which I think calculated to have a very salutary influence on our minds. The consideration is, that God *equally* approves of sincere Christians, whether they are baptized by immersion, or by sprinkling. My meaning is, that the judgment of God respecting Christians depends altogether upon their real internal character;

and that, if they are *equally conscientious and holy*, they are *equally the objects of his approbation*, although they are baptized in different ways. Their not observing an external rite in the same manner can be of no account with God. In the midst of our discussions and controversies respecting outward rites and forms, let us charge ourselves to remember this.

That God does in fact regard Christians, who are baptized in different ways, with equal approbation, might be made evident from the representations of his word, and from his actual administration. But formal proof cannot be necessary. Those who are familiar with the Scriptures have learnt, that God judges of men in the manner I have described. And we cannot fail to receive the same impression from what is manifest in his administration. I am happy to acknowledge those, who prefer immersion as the mode of baptism, to be sincere friends to Christ; and I would not cease to rejoice in all the tokens of the divine favor which they receive. But do not those Christians, who use sprinkling or affusion, receive as many tokens of divine favor? Does not God give them as high a degree of the influence of the Holy Spirit? And in consequence of this, do they not exhibit as high a degree of sanctification? Have they not as ardent love to the Saviour, and as much zeal for the promotion of his cause? Do they not labor as diligently and pray as fervently for the salvation of the world? Are not their labors as successful? And do not their prayers meet with as much acceptance, and obtain as many gracious answers? Do they not as sensibly enjoy the presence of God in the special ordinances of the gospel, in seasons of affliction, and in the hour of death? Will not as welcome and joyful an entrance be ministered to them into the everlasting kingdom of their Saviour? And will they not enjoy as high a degree of blessedness in heaven? Now if it is indeed so, that God grants to those, who believe sprinkling or affusion to be the proper mode of baptism, as many tokens of his approbation and love, as to those who prefer immersion; is not the conclusion obvious, that God does not consider the particular form of baptism to be of any essential consequence as to the great interests of religion? It clearly follows

then, that *we* ought to love the followers of Christ who baptize in one way, as much as those who baptize in another way; and that if we consider the form of this rite as of any essential consequence, or suffer it to have any great influence upon our feelings, we commit a lamentable mistake, and place ourselves in opposition to the mind of God. And how deeply is it to be deplored, that any Christians should cherish views and feelings, which are at variance with the divine will, and the divine administration!

And here, as I am about to take my leave of this subject, I must solicit the candid indulgence of those who differ from me, and also those who agree with me in regard to the mode of baptism, while I allow myself in great plainness of speech, and utter my thoughts seriously and unreservedly, as in the presence of him who is the Saviour and Judge of the world.

We must all, I think, be satisfied, that our relation to Christians generally, I mean to those who are real friends to Christ, is unspeakably more important, than our relation to any particular religious denomination, or party. Our relation to Christians generally respects them *as* Christians, *as* those who belong to Christ's spiritual family and bear his image. But the particular relation we sustain to those of our own denomination or party respects them in a very inferior point of light. For their belonging to our party is clearly a matter of infinitely less importance, than their belonging to the holy kingdom of Christ. But do we always regard the subject in this light? Are we not liable to make more of the particular relation which men sustain to us and to our party, than of that high, that paramount relation, which all real Christians sustain to God and his kingdom?

Again. We must all be satisfied, that the salvation of sinners, and the spiritual prosperity of Christ's kingdom, together with our own sanctification and eternal life, should be to us the great objects of desire and pursuit; that no other objects should be suffered to come into competition with these; and that we should do nothing, and countenance nothing, which can in any way interfere with them. But have these great, spiritual interests been always kept uppermost in our minds? Have they not sometimes been almost

forgotten? And have they not too frequently been made subordinate to local or sectarian interests? I have heard of Christians, and of gospel ministers, who have made the *mode* of *baptism* their grand, engrossing subject. I have heard of those, who have been actuated by such an intense zeal in favor of one particular form of this external rite, that they have seemed almost inclined to make it the sum of all religion. Even in those auspicious seasons, when God is pleased in mercy to pour out his Spirit, and produce in the minds of multitudes a deep and overwhelming impression of the evil of sin, and the value of eternal salvation; there are some Christians, and some teachers of religion, (I hope the number will be found small,) who show an unaccountable forwardness to introduce discussions respecting the *mode of baptism;* and, instead of striving with all their hearts, to bring sinners into the kingdom of heaven, and to promote the holiness of believers, make it a favorite object to convince them, that baptism must be administered by immersion. I must say too that I have known those who, in similar circumstances, have shown an unbecoming forwardness and warmth in opposing and decrying the peculiar tenets of the Baptists, and in establishing those of their own party. Now it is well known, that discussions of this kind, whether on one side or the other, have a direct tendency to grieve the Holy Spirit, and to divert the attention of saints and sinners from the one thing needful. The introduction of such a subject, in the way of controversy, especially in a revival of religion, I am sure is *wrong*. It is offensive to God, and will be followed, as it often has been, by the withdrawment of his gracious influence. And I would earnestly beseech any ministers or Christians, who are inclined to such a course as that to which I have now referred, to pause a few moments, and seriously to inquire, whether they are pursuing the great object, for which Jesus died on the cross, and for which he has given us the gospel, and the day of salvation; whether they are not in danger of substituting an excessive zeal for an outward rite, or rather, the *form* of such a rite, in the place of pure love to Christ, and to the immortal souls of men; and whether they have any reason to think, that a subject of this kind will appear

as important to them at the Judgment day, as it does now. My Christian brethren, with whom I am expostulating, expect to dwell eternally in heaven with an innumerable multitude of God's people, who differ from them as to the mode of administering baptism. And I am very sure, that "the general assembly and church of the first born, who are written in heaven," and "the spirits of just men made perfect," will not be divided into different and contending parties, on account of their having received baptism in different ways. The presence of their Saviour, and their perfect love to him, will make them *all one*. And any strife, or prejudice, or coldness, existing among them in this world, will either be buried in a happy oblivion, or will be remembered with grief, (if grief can be found in that happy world,) and with emotions of gratitude for that infinite grace, which has delivered them from the weakness and imperfection of their earthly state, and prepared them for the holy employments and pleasures of heaven.

With these few suggestions I dismiss the subject. But there are other subjects, relating to the present and future happiness of all the children of God, on which I should love to enlarge. If we are real Christians, we are entitled to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Christ is even now the portion of our souls; and we shall shortly be with him where he is. Having this hope in us, let us purify ourselves, as Christ is pure. Let us walk by faith, not by sight. As to the general interests of Christ's kingdom, and as to the particular interests of our own denomination; as to the *substance* of religion, and as to its outward *forms*, let us endeavor to judge and feel as Christ does, — and as we ourselves shall, when the shadows of time shall vanish, and we shall arrive at a world of perfect light. There all the redeemed, — delightful thought! — *all* the redeemed, forgetting every distinction of name or sect, will unite their joyful hearts and voices in praise to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. Let us do all in our power to prepare ourselves and others for that blessed world, and to render the society of the redeemed on earth like what it will be in heaven. Henceforth we will have no strife, but to copy the love and

meekness and forbearance of the blessed Jesus, and to advance his cause. We will heartily rejoice in the work of the Holy Spirit among Christians of every description, and guard with the most sacred care against everything which would hinder its progress. We will suffer no zeal for any personal object, or for the interest of any one sect, to take place of that holier zeal which we ought to cherish, for the glory of our common Lord, and the prosperity of his universal empire. If we may but have the joy to see him inherit all nations, our souls shall be satisfied. We will not cease to love thee, and to pray for thy peace, O kingdom of Christ. If we forget thee, let our right hand forget her cunning. If we do not remember thee, let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth.

LECTURE CXIX.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The opinions which have been entertained respecting this ordinance have been very different from each other, and this difference of opinion has occasioned a variety of controversies. And in consequence of these controversies, the conceptions of the bulk of Christians have become indistinct and obscure, and the appropriate benefits of the ordinance in a great measure prevented. It is with a strange mixture of pleasure and pain, that I review the opinions held by distinguished writers among the Catholics and even among the Protestants, relative to the Lord's Supper. Their writings contain a large amount of plain Scriptural truth. But how much do we find that is erroneous or unintelligible!

One of the chief sources of error and obscurity on this subject is the confounding of the literal with the tropical sense of the words used in the ordinance. By a very common figure of speech, the bread and wine are called the body and blood of Christ. And it is by a similar figure that the Apostle calls *believers* bread. 1 Cor. 10: 17, "We are one bread." The bread used in the sacrament is a symbol or representative of the body of Christ. And when Christians are called "one bread," bread, that is, the one loaf of bread, is a symbol of the union of believers as one body. The language in both cases is equally figurative.

The elements used in the ordinance are, literally, bread and wine, — not something else which has the *appearance* of bread and wine, but *real* bread and wine, and nothing else. These are

the signs or symbols. It is also true that the body and blood which are signified, are literally the body and blood of Christ, the very body which was crucified on Calvary by order of Pilate, and the very blood which was there shed for the remission of sin.

The bread and wine, and the body and blood of Christ, are all realities, — not imaginations, or fictions. Their relation to each other is that of signs to the things signified. So when it was said of the rock in the wilderness, "that rock was Christ," a relation was asserted between the rock and Christ, and it was the relation of a sign to the thing signified. To suppose the language to be literally true, would be to suppose that the rock was so changed as to become really that living being, the Son of God, or that the Son of God was really changed into the substance of a rock. The declaration of the Apostle could not be *literally* true on any other supposition.

I have referred to the case just mentioned for the purpose of showing what would be the consequence of giving a literal interpretation to the figurative language of Scripture. Who can count the errors which are to be traced to this source? But I shall limit my remarks to the ordinance of the Supper. If the words of Christ, "This is my body and this is my blood," should be taken literally, the popish doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass would follow of course. But the doctrine is palpably false and absurd. For Christ never had but one body, and that was the body which was offered up "*once* for all," as the Scripture says, and which was raised from the dead, and which was carried up into heaven, where it is to remain till Christ's second coming. To say that the sacramental bread is the real and veritable body of Christ, is to say that his body is at the same time in heaven and on earth, and that it is at the same time in ten thousand different places on earth, which would imply that he has ten thousand bodies or that his one body, which has only the common dimensions of a human body, is enlarged so as to be in a sense omnipresent. Furthermore, to suppose that the sacramental bread and wine are really transmuted into Christ's body and blood, so that instead of eating real bread and drinking real wine, we do

really and literally eat his flesh and drink his blood, would be to suppose that we are cannibals, and not Christians.

The Romanists hold that, in the *mass*, Jesus Christ is really and truly immolated, or offered up as a sacrifice, for the sins of the world, and this doctrine follows of course from their manner of interpreting the language of Scripture. But the doctrine directly contradicts the teachings of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who takes special pains, ch. ix. and x., to show that Christ was distinguished from the former sacrifices, which were offered up *often*, in that he was offered up only once, and by that one offering wrought out a perfect redemption for his people.

Further, Christ was offered up as a sacrifice by crucifixion. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. This is the way in which he was immolated. Now if he is truly and literally sacrificed in the *mass*, in other words, if he is literally *crucified*, it is natural to ask, who crucifies him? The Catholics say, he is immolated by the priest. But does the priest really crucify him? Does he perpetrate the deed, which was perpetrated on Calvary "by wicked hands?" Those who immolated Christ were "murderers." Is the Catholic priest a murderer? If not, then are the Roman soldiers raised from the dead to do again what they did so long ago at Jerusalem? Or are other enemies present to accomplish the work of crucifixion? The Scriptures mention none who *crucify Christ afresh*, except the vilest apostates.

But there is still another difficulty. If Christ is truly and literally offered up as a sacrifice in the *mass*, and offered up in the only way, that is, by crucifixion; then every time the *mass* is repeated, he suffers anew the agonies of crucifixion. And he suffers those agonies at the same time in all the places where the *mass* is celebrated. And the more frequently it is repeated, the more frequently does he suffer and die. On this supposition, his crucifixion on Calvary was only the commencement of a series of sufferings to be endured by him in all ages. And as he is now immolated every week in so many thousand places, his sufferings every week are immeasurably greater than they were when he was crucified in only one place. Catholics ought to regard this as a

fearful subject, and to consider well what pains and agonies they cause the Saviour to endure at the *mass*, — *real* pains and agonies, if his crucifixion is now repeated, — unless indeed he can literally suffer the pains of crucifixion so frequently and in so many places, without being conscious of it.

I should not thus spend time to expose opinions which every man of sober judgment knows to be false, did I not wish to show what consequences flow from a manifest violation of the just principles of interpreting the word of God, and from perverting the faculties of the mind to the purposes of superstition.

Will you now, in the exercise of a sound mind, dismiss all these groundless fancies and monstrous absurdities, and see how plain, how simple and precious is the institution of the Lord's Supper?

First, notice the adaptedness of the bread and wine to the purposes to be answered by the rite. The body and blood signified by the bread and wine, were not mere human flesh and blood, nor even *Christ's* body and blood considered in a general, indefinite sense, but his body broken and his blood shed on the cross, as an atoning sacrifice. Now as bread and wine nourish and strengthen us corporeally, so Christ crucified, received by faith, imparts the blessings of salvation to our souls.

The ordinance is expressly designed to be *commemorative*. Whenever we eat the sacramental bread and drink the wine, we are to do it in *remembrance* of Christ, and to show his death. Such is the object of the institution, as set forth by Christ and the Apostle Paul. The Saviour, knowing how prone his disciples would be to forget him, appointed this sacred feast to be kept as a perpetual memorial of him.

In this ordinance we are to remember the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to dwell in devout contemplation upon his attributes, his offices, his works, and his blessings. We are particularly to meditate on "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Of all the precious things in the universe, what is so precious as *love?* And where was pure love ever so gloriously displayed as in Christ? Take the best of men; and there may peradventure be some one of them, who would lay down his life for his *friends*. But Christ

suffered and died for his *enemies*. Even *divine* love, which had from the beginning been constantly active in the bestowment of good through the wide creation, had never before accomplished a work like this. "Herein is love," said the disciple who had so often leaned on the bosom of Jesus; — "herein is love;" love in a new and peculiar manifestation; love submitting to the severest sufferings, even the untold agonies of crucifixion for the benefit of the ill-deserving; — love bearing the tremendous burden of human guilt. The angels in heaven, who had long witnessed the operations of divine goodness, felt a new interest in this manifestation of love, and desired to look into it. At the sacramental Supper, this is to be a leading subject of contemplation with us. We are to remember the *love of Christ*. And what can be more consonant to the dictates of an enlightened mind and a pious heart, than to be conversant with such a subject — to have communion in our souls with Christ crucified? Who can duly estimate this privilege? In the exercise of that faith which gives present reality to invisible, spiritual objects, we are to behold the Lamb of God; in devout contemplation we are to be present with the blessed Jesus in that chamber where he kept the Passover with his disciples and instituted this significant and commemorative rite; to listen to his last conversation with his apostles, and his earnest prayer for them and for all his people; then to follow him to the garden, where he was exceedingly sorrowful, and fell on his face, and repeatedly offered up such an agonizing but submissive prayer to his Father; then to witness his meeting with the traitor and his yielding himself to the band of soldiers, though he could have summoned legions of angels to his rescue, or could have confounded them in a moment by his own omnipotence; then to be with him while he stood before his persecutors and to behold his lamb-like meekness and gentleness, his fortitude and majesty; to accompany him as he carried his own cross to the place of execution, and to see what took place there from the sixth to the ninth hour; — then to fix our eyes upon him as he was laid in the sepulchre of Joseph; and early on the first day of the week to follow the pious women in their visit to the place where the Lord lay, and to witness their

ecstasy when they found that he was risen from the dead; to be present at his repeated interviews with his disciples after his resurrection; to hear his touching questions to penitent Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" — to notice his condescending kindness to the incredulous Thomas, when he said to him, "reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." We are also to remember the last meeting of Jesus with his disciples in Galilee, his gracious commission to his apostles, and his ascension into heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

These and such as these are the recollections which are to occupy our minds when we celebrate this Christian ordinance.

But we do not answer the design of the ordinance by the mere act of *memory*. We are to exercise an affectionate faith and confidence in Christ and a reliance upon him, as an all-sufficient Saviour. His glorious character is to excite in us the highest veneration and homage; and while we consider his voluntary sufferings and death for our salvation, we are to abhor ourselves for sin, to repent, and to resolve, that henceforth we will live unto him who died for us. If we would do what belongs to us as duty in observing this sacred rite, we must abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, and devote ourselves to a holy and useful life.

But the Lord's Supper is to be regarded in still another light. It has indeed a happy moral influence, promoting faith, and gratitude and love, and exciting us to diligence in the discharge of duty. But it has a higher office. When rightly attended, it becomes a channel of divine influences, a medium through which God bestows his blessings upon believers. In this way God honors his own institution. And it is not to be forgotten that all the good *moral* effect which the ordinance produces upon the minds of believers, is owing to the grace of God imparted to them through this sacred channel. While in the exercise of a penitent and believing heart, they receive the sacramental bread and wine, their divine Saviour is graciously present, and manifests himself to them as he does not to the world, and by granting them larger measures of his Spirit,

raises them to higher attainments in holiness, and gives them to experience purer joys.

But when I say that this sacred rite is the channel of divine grace, I do not mean to distinguish it in this respect from other divinely appointed means. It is indeed *eminently* adapted to impart to the followers of Christ clear and affecting views of his glory and grace, to bring them into spiritual communion with him, and to make them partakers of his benefits. But other things, particularly the word of God, the preaching of the gospel, the observance of the Sabbath, and the faithfulness and the prayers of parents and other Christians are also means appointed of God for the spiritual welfare of man. They are all channels of divine blessings. The word of God whether preached or read, is, through the Holy Spirit quick and powerful, a savor of life, a channel of that divine influence which sanctifies and saves the soul. Can more than this be said of the Lord's Supper, or any outward observance? The fact is, that God, in his great mercy, has appointed a variety of means for the promotion of our spiritual good. And these means produce the best effect when they operate together. The Lord's Supper, separated, as it commonly is in the Catholic church, from its rightful connection with faithful gospel instruction and the clear knowledge of divine things, becomes the occasion of gross superstition and fatal delusion. While, on the other hand, reading or hearing the word of God and the mere knowledge of divine truth, unaccompanied by the use of the outward ordinances of Christianity, would conduce but partially to a truly spiritual life, and would fail essentially of making us complete in all the will of God. The Catholics mistake in attributing a saving efficacy to a mere attendance on the sacrament, without the knowledge of divine truth and the exercise of the Christian graces. And it is the mistake of some modern sects to suppose that Christians in the present life can dispense with the use of the appointed visible ordinances without essential loss to their spiritual interests.

Again. This sacred rite is to assist us not only to recollect what is past, but to keep in mind what is future. We are to show forth

Christ's death "till he come." The second appearing of Christ is the dearest object of our hopes. Our hearts are sometimes filled with sorrow to think that we are so long separated from our Saviour, — that our eyes have never seen him whom our soul loveth. But we are reminded of his sure promise, that he will come again and receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also. Then, we shall not see him through a glass darkly, but face to face. This will be the consummation of our blessedness. Until this blessedness is realized, we shall find these outward ordinances, these symbols of distant, invisible objects, unspeakably precious. But when we shall attain to perfection in holiness, and shall fix our enraptured eyes on that merciful Saviour who loved us and died for us, these outward rites now so needful for us, will give place to purer and nobler services and to celestial enjoyments.

Finally. The Lord's Supper is a means of manifesting and promoting the mutual love and union of believers. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion," that is, the partaking together, "of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body." The followers of Christ are, in reality, all one. They serve the same Lord. They are enlisted in the same cause. And so far as they act in character, they love one another. In this ordinance we show that we are one. And if our hearts and lives should fully correspond with the design of this ordinance, the world would be constrained to say, behold! how these Christians love one another! The Lord's Supper not only expresses this union, but is a means of promoting it. When we join together in commemorating the death of Christ, and consider that sinful, wretched state from which we are all delivered by his atoning blood, and when we consider that we must all be saved by the same abounding grace, and are to dwell forever in the presence of the same adorable Redeemer; we feel an influence which softens the heart, and gently but powerfully draws us to mutual affection and kindness. And how strange it is, that Christians should ever separate themselves from one another in the observance of this uniting ordinance! If they differ in some other

things, they are agreed in this. They eat the sacramental bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Christ, and in obedience to his command. And why not obey together? Why not commemorate Christ's dying love together? This is a common duty, and a token of union. In regard to this sacred rite they are agreed; and why not thus far walk together? To attempt to force a union, or an expression of union where there is a real *disunion*, would be unwise. But what shall we say of forcing a *disunion*, where there is a real *union?* The Lord hasten the time, when all Christians shall not only be but appear to be one family, and shall more fully exhibit that spirit of mind which Jesus represented as the grand evidence of discipleship; — "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye love one another.*"

LECTURE CXX.

THE LORD'S DAY OR CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

THE Lord's day or the Christian's Sabbath, is of vital consequence to the interests of mankind. Whatever may be the value of other means appointed for our spiritual benefit, they would have but little efficacy without the Sabbath. Even the sacred Scriptures, the only standard of our faith and practice, and the institution of the gospel ministry, would turn to but small account, should we give up "the day which the Lord hath made," and so deprive ourselves of any regular and divinely appointed season for reading the Scriptures in private, and hearing their doctrines and precepts explained and inculcated in public. I say *a divinely appointed* season. A day enjoined by the authority of God is manifestly required in this case; because no consideration of mere expediency, no civil or ecclesiastical decree, and no agreement made among individual Christians will be likely to bind the consciences or to regulate the actions of men. Unless the day of holy rest is believed to be set apart and consecrated by God himself, the current of worldly business and pleasure will at length sweep it away even from the church; the only alternative then is, that there must be a Sabbath set apart by divine authority, or no Sabbath at all. Even if a particular day should be voluntarily observed for religious purposes by individuals, or by a Christian community, without the belief of any divine command enjoining it; such a day would be very different, and its influence upon the minds even of good men would be very different, from

what it would be, if it were regarded as an appointment of God. The same principle obtains here as in regard to the Scripture. If we consider it as a mere human production, it will exert but an inconsiderable influence upon us. Its doctrines and precepts will have little or no power over our consciences. GOD must speak, or man will not hear, GOD must command, or man will not obey.

We shall find all this verified in the history of Christendom, and particularly in the history of our own times. Who are they that trample on the Sabbath, and make it subservient to their worldly pursuits? Not merely infidels; but the generality of those who profess a respect for the Sabbath, but do not regard it as a divine institution. And who are they that conscientiously and faithfully perform its sacred duties, and secure its inestimable benefits? Those who look upon it as set apart for holy purposes by the authority of God. A proper belief, that our Creator and Sovereign requires the Sabbath to be kept holy, silences the clamors of the world, bars out vain thoughts, subdues the passions, diffuses a sacredness through all the hours of the day, and imparts a special influence to divine truth, whether heard in the sanctuary, or contemplated in the stillness of retirement. Without such a belief, the benefits naturally resulting from this divine institution, will not be obtained. The ministers of religion and civil rulers may unite their efforts to promote the observance of a day which is made sacred only by human authority; but they will have no prospect of success. The command to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy," coming from man, is imbecile. It excites no cordial reverence. It produces no fear of transgression, except so far as outward, visible actions are concerned. Who will stand in awe of a command which is laid upon him by a being like himself? But the command to keep the Sabbath holy, coming from the Sovereign of the world, is clothed with power, and takes hold on the conscience and heart. Being the command of Him who is everywhere present, and whose searching eye is ever upon us, it has the same authority over us when we are removed from the notice of man, as when we are

placed in the most public view. It is a motive which touches all the springs of action.

When we look upon the nations of Europe, we behold scenes of revolution, strife, carnage, and anarchy. Various attempts are made to introduce improvements into the forms of government and to promote quietness and harmony, and the salutary influence of law. But these attempts are not successful. Things remain in the most ominous condition, and patriots and politicians know not what to do. Their wisdom fails them. Now why do they not see, that the cause of all these evils lies in the destitution of moral and religious principle in the mass of the community? The experiment which has so often been made, may be a thousand times repeated; and the result will be the same. No constitutions of government, however wisely framed; no improvement of the people at large in mere literature and science; no lessons derived from history and experience, and no motives addressed to personal interest or safety, can hush the commotions which agitate the nations; because none of these can subdue pride, ambition and selfishness, make men upright and benevolent, and engage them in those employments which will contribute to individual and public happiness. Why are not patriots and legislators sensible of this? Why do they not see and feel, after so much light has been cast on the subject, that the only effectual means of removing the calamities which now afflict the nations, and of warding off the still more fearful evils which threaten them, is, the healthful influence of moral and religious principle, diffused through the mass of society? It is evident, that the same character which qualifies men to be happy in the world to come, will qualify them to be, in the highest sense, good members of civil society. And if civil society shall be chiefly constituted of enlightened and good men, a sure foundation will be laid for permanent peace and prosperity. Now without undervaluing any of the appointed means of human improvement, I hold it to be an obvious and certain truth, that the chief means of forming men to a good character is, *the due observance of the Christian Sabbath;* and that without this, all other means will fail. If this

benevolent institution were rightly observed, the evils which threaten this and other nations would disappear. The remedy I propose, is simple and easy; but it is sure. And if the violence of ambition and party zeal and the prevalence of vice and disorder should so increase, as to overturn our free governments, and involve us in all the horrors experienced by other nations; I am bold to affirm, that no individual, either among the rulers or the people, who conscientiously and faithfully keeps the Christian Sabbath, will be chargeable with helping to bring these evils upon the land; and that the whole guilt will lie at the door of those, who do not reverence the Lord's day, and do not faithfully attend upon its holy and sanctifying duties.

As to those gospel ministers, and rulers, and private citizens, who keep the Sabbath day holy, who diligently engage in its public and private services, and who use their influence to impress upon the minds of others the high obligations of this divine institution, — they ought to be acknowledged as *true patriots;* and they are entitled to the warmest gratitude of the community for the substantial contribution they make to the public good. While on the other hand, every man who neglects to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, shows himself an enemy to the best interests of his fellow creatures. He is guilty of casting contempt upon the most effectual means which infinite wisdom has provided for curing the madness of the passions, for checking the prevalence of error and vice, and preparing the human family for the highest enjoyment of which they are capable.

In regard to the means best adapted to promote the due observance of the Sabbath; some have relied upon the salutary influence of civil laws requiring the Sabbath to be treated with respect, and forbidding, under severe penalties, all open violations of it. But, in my apprehension, we have no reason to expect, that mere civil enactments will ever be productive of any extensive and permanent benefit in regard to this subject, except merely as they afford protection to Christians in worshipping God according to their own consciences.

The experiment has been often tried here, and in other coun-

tries; but the result has made it evident, that the great interests of morality and religion cannot be safely made to rest on the power of civil law. The due observance of the Sabbath must be promoted by considerations directed to reason, conscience, and the heart. Let men be addressed on the subject from the pulpit, and the press; and let them be addressed with sound argument, and with earnest and affectionate exhortation and entreaty; let them be addressed as rational and moral and accountable beings, whose everlasting destiny will be fixed according as they profane the Sabbath, or keep it holy. Let the sacredness of the day be inculcated upon the minds of children and youth, and let the faithful instructions of parents and teachers be accompanied and enforced by a good example; and let all who reverence the Sabbath lift up their fervent supplications to him who is the Lord of the Sabbath, that he would graciously interpose and by his effectual influence, bring men everywhere to remember and love the day of spiritual rest: — let these and other congenial methods be pursued, and with the divine blessing, it will ere long be seen by all men, that the objections which have been made against the institution of the Sabbath, have sprung from depravity or ignorance; that the appointment of a sacred day is the source of immeasurable good to the world, and is one of the highest manifestations of divine love.

I have represented it as indispensable to the appropriate influence and usefulness of the Sabbath, that it should be regarded as of *divine authority*. I shall now show, that the Sabbath is indeed *invested with divine authority*, and is obligatory upon the consciences of men.

Go back then to the beginning of the world; and you find that, immediately after God had finished the work of creation, he instituted the Sabbath. He appointed the very first day which followed the creation, to be a sacred day. "God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it," — that is, he set it apart to a special and holy use. God thus made known his will, that man should enter on his immortal existence by observ-

ing this sacred institution, and by enjoying its benefits. And by appointing it at the commencement of human existence, God plainly signified, that he intended it for the whole race. "The Sabbath was made," not merely for the parents of the species, and not for any nation or tribe, but "*for man.*" It was appointed from the beginning, and it was appointed for the whole race. And thus it was distinguished above all other positive institutions.

Some learned writers have held, that the Sabbath was first appointed at the giving of the law on Sinai, and that the mention of it in Genesis was by way of anticipation. But it is manifest, that the account of what took place on the seventh day, as much as what took place on each of the preceding six days, is a simple narrative of facts; and we may just as well say that the creation of light, or the creation of man, was mentioned in Gen. i, by way of anticipation, as that the appointment of the Sabbath is to be so understood.

It is to be kept in mind, that the History which Moses wrote of the antediluvian world is exceedingly succinct, containing accounts of hundreds of years in a few short sentences. But it might be shown, that even in that brief narrative evidence is not wanting of the counting of time by weeks. But when we come down to the time of Moses all is made plain.

We find in Ex. xii. the first express mention of the Sabbath after its appointment in Paradise. And it is to be particularly noticed, that it is here recognized as *an institution already existing.*

Even before Moses said anything to the people on the subject, it is said; Ex. 16: 22, "that on the sixth day, they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man." This being told to Moses, he said, (it being the sixth day) — "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath." He did not say, God now appoints to-morrow to be a Sabbath; but it *is the Sabbath;* — just as we should say now, to-morrow is the Sabbath and we must make provision for two days.

Proceed now to the giving of the law, Ex. 20: 9 — 11. God said "*Remember* the Sabbath day to keep it holy." *Remember*

that it was set apart by God at the beginning of the world. This original appointment of the Sabbath in Paradise is expressly mentioned in the fourth commandment itself, as a reason why it should be kept holy. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, — and *rested* the *seventh day;* wherefore the Lord *blessed* the *Sabbath day* and *hallowed it.*" Thus it appears that the obligation to keep the Sabbath did not originate at the giving of the fourth commandment on Sinai, as the commandment itself refers to the origin of the institution in Paradise. God reminded the people of the original appointment, and now enjoined it anew, and urged the observance of it by additional motives. His great mercy in delivering them from Egyptian bondage, was in truth a weighty motive to obey this and every other command. But the fact that this instance of divine mercy was mentioned as a reason for remembering the Sabbath, no more proves that the duty of observing the day commenced at that time, than it proves that the duty of worshipping the true God or of honoring father and mother then commenced. You may say, that all the precepts, excepting the fourth, were the laws of our intelligent and moral nature, and were written on the heart, and so were of universal obligation. This is true. And I think that a thorough examination will show, that the law of the Sabbath is also a law of our nature; that it as really results from the constitution of our minds, as moral and religious beings, as the law which requires us to worship God and to avoid idolatry; that we must keep one day in seven, yes, just that proportion of time, as holy, or we cannot reach the ends of our moral existence. I adopt this conclusion from my confidence in God, who perfectly knows what we are, and who unquestionably adapts all his institutions and commands to our nature and necessities, so that the appointment of the Sabbath as truly as any other divine law, "is holy, just, and good." I am led to the same conclusion from common experience, — the experience of those who by keeping the Sabbath holy, secure to themselves the blessings of spiritual purity and life and joy; and the experience of those who, by neglecting and

desecrating the Sabbath, involve themselves in the evils of utter moral ruin.

It is a circumstance which cannot be overlooked, that the command enjoining the Sabbath was, together with the other nine precepts of the law, written by the finger of God *on tables of stone*, indicating that it is, like them, of permanent obligation. The decalogue is made up of what are called *moral* precepts. These precepts are expressly enjoined by God, and they are moreover grounded in our intellectual, spiritual nature; and thus they come to us with a two-fold obligation. And while the obligation of laws which are merely ritual or ceremonial, may pass away, mankind in all ages are held to observe these moral precepts.

We learn from the Old Testament how the Sabbath was regarded by the prophets and the faithful servants of God, and what divine judgments came upon those who profaned the day. I shall quote only one passage to show how preëminently important the Sabbath was in the view of God himself. Isa. 58: 13, 14; "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Let us now see how the institution of the Sabbath was treated under the *Christian* dispensation. Nothing can be more obvious than that Jesus Christ, the head of the church, uniformly manifested a pious reverence for the day of rest. He did indeed both by his instructions and his example aim to free the institution from the influence of superstition and bigotry. Accordingly it was a lesson which he repeatedly inculcated upon the people, that it was lawful to do works of mercy and charity on the Sabbath. When he was accused of violating the Sabbath because he and his disciples went through the field and plucked corn to eat, the

manner in which he defended himself is worthy of special notice. Matt. 12: 3, 4; "But he said unto them, have ye not read what David did when he was a hungered, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" David was justified in doing what he did, because it was a matter of necessity, as he was suffering for want of food. In other circumstances it would not have been lawful. Christ's reference to this case, as a justification of his conduct, implied an acknowledgment of the sanctity of the Sabbath, and an acknowledgment too that, in ordinary circumstances, he should not have done what he did on the Sabbath, but that he and his disciples were hungry, as David and his company were, and were therefore justified, as David was, in departing from the letter of the law to satisfy hunger. It was a plain recognition of the law of the Sabbath, as having divine authority; and it was a good example for Christians, showing that they are not to depart even from the letter of the fourth commandment, except in cases of necessity. At the close of his remarks to those who charged him with profaning the Sabbath, Jesus declared that he was *the Lord of the Sabbath*, and therefore had a right to liberate the observance of it from whatever was burdensome under the former economy, and so to modify it, that it should in all respects be adapted to the new dispensation. Such was the position taken by our Saviour. He maintained the obligation and sanctity of the seventh day, and at the same time asserted, that he was Lord of the Sabbath.

It was, I doubt not, in conformity with the instructions which Jesus gave his apostles while he remained with them, or with the teachings of the Holy Spirit which he sent to be their guide after his departure, that they early began to show a special regard to the first day of the week. Jesus himself conferred great honor on that day, by choosing it as the time of his resurrection, and by repeatedly meeting with his disciples on the return of that day. Again. The first day of the week was marked by that new and extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit which was to char-

acterize the gospel dispensation. The Pentecost has been clearly shown by learned men to have fallen on the Lord's day. Thus the first day of the week, or the Christian Sabbath, may be considered as at the same time dedicated to God the Creator of the world, to the Son of God as the Redeemer, and to the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier.

The apostles, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed upon the first day as the day of holy rest. This is evident from the sacred records. The apostles and early Christians met for public worship on the first day of the week; and it is frequently mentioned as a thing well understood, that this was the day to be kept holy. At the close of the century, John the aged Apostle, had the revelation which closes the New Testament, made to him on the first day of the week. He says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." He does not speak as though this was a new name given to the day, but a name well understood, and with which Christians were familiar.

It is apparent that the change of the Sabbatical institution from the seventh to the first day of the week, was completed, not suddenly, but by a gradual process. This was true also in the transition from circumcision to baptism. Though the latter was intended to supersede the former; yet for a time they existed together. All Christians were baptized; and some retained circumcision, till at length circumcision was abandoned. The same appears to have been the case as to the Sabbath. Christians generally, I suppose universally, observed the first day of the week, called the Lord's day; and some retained the seventh day also, called the Sabbath. And the apostles themselves often made use of that day for public worship. But mutual prejudice and dissension soon appeared among the followers of Christ. And it was evidently the Apostle's aim to remove these, and to promote forbearance and charity, in what he said to the Roman Christians, Rom. 14: 5, 6, and to the Colossians in Col. 2: 16. There is good reason to think, that the Apostle referred to the dispute about the duty of observing *the seventh day*, and meant to give liberty to Christians to observe it or not, according to the dictate

of their own consciences; and thus to prepare the way for it to subside quietly, and for the Lord's day universally to take its place. It does not appear that the Apostle ever spoke of the observance of *the Lord's day*, as a matter of indifference.

That the seventh day Sabbath was soon given up in the churches planted by the apostles, might be made perfectly evident by citations from the earliest writings extant. I shall quote but a few of the many passages which relate to the subject.

Ignatius, a companion of the Apostle, says, "Let us no longer *Sabbatize*, but keep the Lord's day on which our life arose." Justin Martyr, about the close of the first century, speaks of Christians assembling to hear religious instruction on the day called Sunday, and says, "it was the day on which the creation of the world began, and on which Christ rose from the dead." Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the Apostle John, says, "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keeps the Sabbath." Augustine says, "The Lord's day was by the resurrection of Christ declared to Christians and from that very time it began to be celebrated as the Christian's festival." And Athanasius says, "The Lord transferred the Sabbath to the Lord's day."

It has been supposed by some, that under the Christian dispensation, the fourth command is given up, and that we can no longer appeal to it as having authority to bind the conscience. I cannot but regard this as a great mistake. The conclusion which I have been led to adopt, and which I think may be fully sustained by sound arguments, is this; that the appointment of one day in seven as holy time, was made in Paradise, and expressly repeated at Sinai; that from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, the seventh day was to be observed in commemoration of the finishing of the work of creation, that being a work so glorious to God and so worthy to be celebrated by man; but that the work of the Redeemer on earth, which was brought to its consummation by his resurrection, is in some respects still more interesting and important to redeemed sinners, and that, in commemoration of this event, it was the will of God, that

the original institution, that is, the setting apart of one day in seven for holy purposes, should be observed under the new dispensation on the first day of the week, thus changing, not the substance of the institution, but only the particular day on which it is to be observed. According to this view of the subject, the fourth command of the decalogue still expresses the will of God as to keeping a holy day, and as to the proportion of time to be kept, nothing in reality being detracted from the essential nature of what is required in that command, but on the other hand a new and most momentous circumstance, that of the resurrection of Christ, being made specially prominent in the celebration of the sacred day.

The proper manner of observing the Sabbath is indicated by the nature of the institution. God *sanctified* the day, that is, set it apart to a sacred and holy use. If we would harmonize with the divine appointment, we must abstain from our ordinary worldly employments and recreations, and spend the day in the public and private exercises of God's worship, and, when occasion requires, in works of necessity and mercy. Is it not a fact that Christians generally fall far short of the use they ought to make of holy time, and indeed that they have but a very imperfect conception of what it is for them to sanctify the Sabbath? And in our reflections on a dying bed shall we not recal with sorrow our neglects of duty in this respect? If we would comply with God's command to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, we must fill up the time with spiritual and holy duties; must devoutly read the word of God, and other books which are peculiarly spiritual and holy. In conversation we must avoid what is vain and worldly, and dwell on sacred and holy subjects. We must aspire after fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit. Divine and eternal objects must be brought near. We must strive to have all our affections holy, and to attain to an entire conformity with the character and law of God. We must make it our object every Lord's day, to subdue the evils of our hearts and to grow in grace, and must watchfully guard against whatever would dis-

tract our minds, or turn off our thoughts from divine things, or hinder our communion with God in prayer. Now if, through divine grace, we should keep a single Sabbath as we ought, what blessed effects would result from it! And if through the help of God, we should rise to the habit of spiritual diligence and watchfulness and fervent prayer on each holy day through the year, and from year to year; we should make visible advances in the divine life. The Lord's day would become a distinguished day. We should look back upon every Sabbath as a season of spiritual life and joy, a day in which we tasted that the Lord is good, and enjoyed the beginning of heavenly rest. If now you would conquer sin and be adorned with the beauties of holiness; if you would please God, and secure his blessing upon yourselves, your friends and fellow creatures; if you would be useful to the church and the world, and be prepared to die in peace and to enter into the joy of your Lord; then, trusting in the grace of Christ, deliberately and earnestly resolve, that henceforth you will remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

LECTURE CXXI.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY.

In our treatment of this subject, we must carefully observe all the principles which are laid down in the Scriptures. Christ and his apostles must be regarded as infallible teachers. Whatever doctrine they taught, we must receive as binding upon our faith. If we find any direction or act of Christ or his apostles respecting the government of the church, we must consider it as expressing his mind or the mind of his inspired apostles. And why is not an expression of the divine will as obligatory on us in relation to this subject, as to any other? If in regard to any of the particular ways of proceeding in church government, we are left without instruction from the word of God, we are at liberty, and are under obligation, to make a proper use of our own discretion. In such a case it is manifestly the will of God that we should proceed according to our conviction of what is expedient and suitable. But so far as general principles of ecclesiastical government are laid down in the word of God, those principles must govern us;—making what may be called the *basis of Church Government.* Particular legislation will be called for. But whenever we legislate, we should keep our eye upon those permanent principles which form our ecclesiastical constitution; remembering that any act of ours contravening those principles, would be wholly unauthorized.

There is only one thing which can in any way modify these suggestions. It is admitted that Christ and his apostles were guided

by infallible wisdom. But it may be said, that their wisdom was exercised with reference to the circumstances of the times in which they lived, every direction and act of theirs having been certainly right *in those circumstances*. But suppose some direction or act of theirs related, not to what was of a moral or spiritual nature, but to some outward form, the propriety of which depended upon existing circumstances. The question is, whether, in different circumstances, we are bound to conform to such a direction or such an example. And this is my reply. If the direction or act was manifestly *grounded upon* the peculiar circumstances then existing, and if circumstances now exist which are so materially different that, had they existed in the time of Christ or his apostles, the direction or act referred to would unquestionably have been different; in such a case we should be at liberty to govern ourselves by other principles. As an illustration, take the judgment which the Apostle gave to the Christians at Corinth, that it was expedient for them to abstain from marriage. His judgment was grounded upon the peculiar circumstances of the time. He expressly referred to those circumstances, as the reason of his advice. Now in circumstances essentially different, the reason of the Apostle's advice does not exist; and it is manifest that we are at liberty to regulate our conduct by those other considerations, which are obvious to reason, and sanctioned by Scripture.

If then it shall appear, that any direction or act of Christ or his apostles relative to the government of the church, was grounded upon peculiar circumstances then existing, and not on general principles; and if those circumstances have now ceased, and others, having a different bearing on the subject, have come in their place; then, I apprehend, that direction or act is not to govern us. With the exception of such cases we must regard any direction of Christ, or any direction or act of his apostles, in regard to church government, as establishing a principle which is obligatory on Christians at all times.

There are, in a general point of view, two forms of church government. 1. *Prelacy*, or *government administered by prelates, or bishops*. 2. *Government of a popular character*.

Prelacy is thus described by Hooker: "A bishop is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance, there is given, not only power of administering the word and sacraments, which power other presbyters have, but also *a further power to ordain ecclesiastical persons, and a power of chiefty in government over presbyters as well as laymen.* So that this office as he is a presbyter or pastor, consisteth in those things which are common to him with other pastors, as in ministering the word and sacraments; — but those things incident to his office, which properly make him a bishop, cannot be common to him with other pastors. Now — bishops — are either at large, or else with restraint; at large, when the subject of their government — is not tied to any certain place. Bishops with restraint are they, whose government over the church is contained within some definite, local compass beyond which their jurisdiction reacheth not." Episcopalians expressly claim for their system the sanction of Scripture and the primitive church, and maintain that from the time of the apostles there have been three orders of ministers in the church of Christ, bishops, priests, and deacons.

In my deliberate opinion, I differ from the advocates of prelacy; and I shall now state somewhat particularly the *reasons* of this difference.

My first reason is, that *the leading principles of prelacy, as now understood and practised, are not authorized by the Christian Scriptures.*

The constitution of the Jewish priesthood has been considered by some, as requiring, or warranting, a similar constitution in the Christian ministry. In the Jewish priesthood there were three orders; the high priest, the priests, and the Levites. But there is no intimation in the New Testament, that the Christian ministry was to be formed after the model of the former priesthood. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews takes pains to show that the Jewish priesthood, which was a part of the Mosaic ritual, is done away; that Jesus Christ, and he only, is the High Priest of Christians; and that all who are set apart to the work of preaching the gospel, are his ministers, or servants. There is a wide and

obvious difference between the plan of the gospel ministry as laid down in the New Testament, and the plan of the priesthood, as laid down in the Old Testament. And whatever may be pretended by some Episcopalians, they are far from making the Jewish priesthood their model. The three orders among Episcopal ministers do not by any means correspond with the orders in the Jewish priesthood. And any attempt to make them more nearly to correspond, would end in a still more visible and unwarrantable departure from the teachings of the New Testament.

It is clear, that there is no foundation for prelacy in any of the *appointments* or *instructions of Christ*. Take his appointment of the seventy disciples, who were sent forth to teach, to work miracles, and to call sinners to repent and believe. This arrangement was intended for important purposes at the commencement of the Christian dispensation. But no one considers it as permanent. And if it had been designed to be permanent, it would be as far as possible from giving any countenance to the Episcopal scheme of three orders in the ministry.

In the next place, Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be his constant companions, to hear his instructions and witness his miracles, and thus to be trained up for the special work assigned them. "He ordained twelve," says Mark, "that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils." These disciples Jesus finally commissioned to go forth as his apostles, and qualified them by the gift of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of his miracles, and particularly of his resurrection, and to be infallible teachers and guides. See Matt. 28: 19, 20. Mark 16: 15, 16. Acts 1: 8. The work to which they were called was a special and momentous work. It was the work of proclaiming the gospel, founding the first churches, establishing the Christian religion by preaching and by miracles, completing the volume of inspiration, and exercising, under Christ, a paramount authority in all the concerns of religion. Their commission and their endowments were adapted to the peculiar objects which

were then to be accomplished. Those peculiar objects having been accomplished, the peculiarities of their office ceased. They were indeed religious teachers, ministers of the gospel; and *as such*, they have *successors*. But they were teachers and ministers in a peculiar sense, and with peculiar qualifications, and peculiar authority. Considered in this light, they have no successors. Others have been sent forth as *missionaries*, as the word *apostles* literally signifies. But those first Christian missionaries were distinguished above all others; and the word apostles, in a high and peculiar sense, has been appropriated to them. Now how does the fact that Christ appointed the apostles to that peculiar work, and distinguished them by their qualifications from other ministers, prove that one set of ministers in after ages is to fill an office and possess qualifications above others? All true ministers of Christ take place of the apostles considered *simply as gospel ministers*. But where are the men at the present day, who inherit what was *peculiar* to the apostolic character and office, or what distinguished the apostles from other gospel ministers? The welfare and even the continuance of the church requires, that men, properly qualified, should from time to time be set apart for the work of the *ministry;* and that the ministry should be a *permanent* institution. In this sense there is a succession, I do not say an uninterrupted, but a real succession from the apostles to the present time. But it can no more be proved that subsequent ministers of the gospel share the peculiarities of the apostolic office, than that they share the peculiarities of the office of Moses or David. When a special and temporary work is to be accomplished, God gives men special qualifications, and a special, temporary commission. And when there is an *ordinary* work to be accomplished, a work which is to be continued from age to age; God gives men qualifications and invests them with an office suited to that *ordinary* work. As far as the work to be done by ordinary ministers of the gospel bears a resemblance to the work which was to be done by Moses, or David, or the twelve apostles, so far, and no farther, can we suppose a resemblance between them in regard to their respective offices and qualifications.

So far as the *peculiarities* of the work assigned to Moses, or David, or the apostles are concerned, a resemblance between them and ordinary ministers is precluded.

If it was indeed the design and the appointment of Christ, that there should be permanently a superior order in the gospel ministry, sharing in the peculiarities of the *apostolic office*, it would certainly be reasonable to expect them to be possessed of the *peculiar qualifications* of the apostles, and with qualifications above those of the inferior orders. But I know not that the superior order of ministers in the Episcopal church pretend to be endued with any of the peculiar qualifications of the apostles, or with qualifications above those which are found in the inferior orders. And I am sure that the work which prelates take upon themselves to perform, is widely different from the peculiar work of the apostles, — in some respects falling short of it, and in other respects going beyond it. Whereas, if prelacy were founded upon the superior office of the apostles, it ought to have substantially the same functions assigned to it, not varying from its standard either in the way of deficiency or excess. But in reality, modern prelates are altogether precluded from the principal works which were peculiar to the apostolic office, such as being witnesses of the life and death and resurrection of Christ, casting out devils, and doing other miracles, and preaching and writing under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit; while in other respects, particularly in assuming and exercising *exclusively* the right of ordination, they transcend the powers exercised by the apostles. But the consideration of this point comes more properly under another head. It is sufficient for my present purpose to show, that the existence of the superior office and superior endowments of the apostles, affords no ground for the existence of a superior order among gospel ministers in subsequent ages. In other words; it having been the will of Christ that the apostles, for the special purposes then to be accomplished, should be invested with distinguished powers and hold a special and distinguished office, does not prove it to be his will that a particular order of ministers should exist in after ages, holding an office like that of

the apostles, and superior to that of ordinary ministers. Prelacy cannot be legitimately founded on the apostolic office. And how it comes to pass, that the advocates of prelacy rest their cause so much on the superior authority belonging to the apostles, it is difficult for me to understand. Their reasoning on this point appears to be wholly inconclusive, unless they can show that there is now the same necessity for the office of prelates, as there was originally for the office of apostles.

It may be thought that the passage, Matt. 18: 18, affords support to the high claims of bishops. Christ said to his apostles, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." But what does this prove? The apostles, as appointed and qualified by Christ, were invested with peculiar authority, and were enabled infallibly to exercise their authority in the business of *church discipline;* for this was the subject introduced in the three preceding verses. They were to have the gift of the Holy Spirit in such measures, that their instructions and their decisions should always be right, and their acts in the affair of *binding* and *loosing* should be confirmed in heaven. But this proves nothing as to three orders in the ministry. And it is no proof of the superior authority of bishops, unless it is made to appear that they possess the miraculous endowments which belonged to the apostles. In connection with this, take the passage, John 20: 22, 23. "Jesus breathed on the apostles, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." The authority here intended, whatever it was, belonged to the *apostles, as endued with the Holy Ghost.* But what proof does it afford of the authority of one order of ministers in the Episcopal church above that of other orders? Episcopalians themselves do not regard it in this light. For when the bishop ordains *priests*, he says to them, "receive ye the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest — whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." Now the priest actually exercises the authority thus committed to him by

the bishop. But how does he exercise it? This appears from the declaration of absolution, or remission of sins, made by the priest in the daily service. He says: "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, — hath given power and commandment to his ministers to *declare* and *pronounce* to his people, *being penitent*, the remission of their sins. He pardoneth all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, etc." This then I judge to be the meaning; that when it is said to the priest at his ordination, "whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven;" he is authorized to *declare*, that *God* will forgive those who repent, and then to pray for repentance, etc. This is what the priest does in the affair of absolution. It is evident that the bishop is not at all distinguished above the priests, in this affair of pronouncing absolution to the penitent. Whether done by the bishop or priest, it is merely declaring that momentous doctrine of the gospel, that God will forgive the penitent. And the right to declare this truth, which belongs alike to all gospel ministers, is no proof of the superiority of one order above another. This right, or authority, was exercised by the apostles, as *inspired* men, and therefore *infallible*. It is exercised by ministers at this day, not as inspired, — not as having received the Holy Ghost in the peculiar sense in which the apostles received it, but as *instructed by* inspired men. Understood as a declaration of a gospel truth, followed by a prayer for repentance and pardon, the rite or practice of absolution is very suitable, and occasions no mistake. But the application to any uninspired men of the exact words which Christ addressed to his inspired apostles, is, in my apprehension, unwarrantable. And I am glad to see in the ordination service, that a second form is provided, in which the words of Christ to his apostles, John 20: 22 are omitted.

Having found that there is nothing in the appointment of the apostles to their peculiar office, which can give support to prelacy; I proceed to say, that prelacy can receive no support from the *instructions* of Christ. If we could find that, in any of his teachings addressed publicly to the multitude, or privately to the apos-

tles, he made it known as his will, that there should in following ages be different ranks or orders among his ministers, there would be no place left for any question or hesitation on our part. But no intimation of this kind appears in any of the instructions of Christ related by the Evangelists, or in anything which the inspired apostles said or did after the ascension of Christ. If the apostles had on any occasion signified, that, in their free intercourse with Christ, they had learnt it to be his intention, that there should be different orders in the ministry, either immediately or ultimately; this would be a conclusive argument for prelacy. But nothing like this can be found.

A sermon was delivered in Boston, by an American prelate,* in which he gives a description of the character and reward of a faithful bishop, which is worthy of the serious attention of every gospel minister. I now refer to it, because it contains a passage relative to the subject which has just been under consideration. The author undertakes to reply to the objection urged against Episcopacy, *from the alleged uncertainty of the succession of bishops*. He says; "Our answer is, that the promise of perpetuity is from the lips of him, who has explicitly declared that his words shall not fail. 'As my father hath sent me, even so send I you.' 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' The same power, which has preserved the Scriptures true, through the successive copies and editions, amidst the distractions of persecution, the perversities of ignorance, and the distortions of heresy and schism, so that, at this moment, the pure word of God can be ascertained, is fully adequate to the faithful preservation of the ministry."—"It is not to human planning, but to divine interposition, that we appeal. The promise is from the lips of him whose power is adequate to the fulfilment."—Again he says; "We may repose, with unshaken confidence, on the ability of the Promiser to fulfil his pledge."

We heartily agree with the prelate, that we "may repose, with unshaken confidence, on the ability of the Promiser to fulfil his pledge;" that his "power is adequate to the fulfilment of his promise," that is, "to the faithful preservation of the ministry;"

* The Right Rev. William H. De Lancey, D. D.

and also that the promise of Christ implies "a succession of validly commissioned ministers, to the end of the world." All this we hold as strongly as Episcopalians can do. With devout gratitude we receive the promise of our Redeemer, as a blessed encouragement to all his faithful ministers, whether in the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist or Methodist Church. True gospel ministers of different denominations have relied upon this gracious promise, and have experienced its fulfilment, and have been animated and comforted by it in their labors. And I cannot doubt that ministers of other denominations have received the benefits of the promise as uniformly, and in as high a degree, as those of the Episcopal church. Nor can I admit that the benefits they have thus received, are stolen benefits, — benefits to which Christ has given them no title. As a matter of fact, he has bestowed the benefits of his presence as readily and as bountifully upon good ministers who are out of the Episcopal church, as upon those who are in it. The Lord Jesus is no respecter of persons; and in the fulfilment of his gracious promise, he makes no difference among pious and faithful ministers, because they differ as to outward forms. If Episcopalians set up an exclusive claim to the promise, that claim we know will not be sanctioned by their Lord and Master. We appeal from them to him. And we shall continue to go to him, and plead his promise, and beseech him to grant his presence, with all the blessings involved in it, not only to us, but to all his faithful ministers, whether they follow with us or not, being fully persuaded, that whatever straitness or partiality there may be among poor, imperfect, erring men, there is none in HIM. Yes; we shall always prize that promise of Christ, and shall apply it to ourselves, undeserving as we are. Sensible that we are utterly insufficient for the arduous duties of the ministry, we shall trust in his all sufficient grace, praying him to be with us according to his word. And why should any of those who differ from us in regard to ecclesiastical forms, attempt to exclude us from the benefits of Christ's precious promise? In his infinite fulness is there not enough for them, and for us? With our present views, we shall continue to appropriate the promise to

ourselves. And if we are ever convinced that it does not belong to us, we shall at once abandon the ministry, well knowing the truth of Christ's declaration; "without me ye can do nothing."

The author of the able sermon referred to considers the promise of Christ, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," as a clear and certain proof of *the perpetual succession of bishops*. *Bishops*, that is, *prelatical bishops*, he regards as the successors of the apostles. In a *qualified* sense, bishops, such as he describes in his sermon, are doubtless *successors* of the apostles; that is, they *follow* or *come after* the apostles, and sustain an office in *some respects* like that of the apostles. In a *limited* sense, they carry forward the work of the gospel ministry, which, in a higher sense, was committed to the apostles at the commencement of the Christian dispensation. In this qualified sense, I hold that faithful bishops are successors of the apostles. But are they the *only* successors? And does the promise of Christ belong *exclusively* to them? If bishops are the *only* successors of the apostles, and if the promise of Christ belongs to none except bishops; then what becomes of the great body of gospel ministers in the Episcopal church and in other parts of the Christian church, who are *not* bishops? There are in the kingdom of Christ on earth many hundreds of gospel ministers to one prelate. What, I ask, becomes of all these, left as they are without the presence of their Lord and Master? But if the promise relates to gospel ministers who are not bishops; then it may be fulfilled towards a succession of such ministers. And if so, how does it imply a succession of *bishops?* And wherein lies the strength of the argument, by which the author attempts to prove the perpetual succession of *bishops*, that is, *prelates*, from the promise of Christ?

It may be said, that the promise belongs primarily and by way of eminence to bishops, and, in a lower sense, to the other order of ministers, ordained by bishops. But how is this made to appear? There is nothing in the promise which indicates, that it was meant to be understood in these different senses, as applied to different orders of ministers. The promise is very simple. "Lo, I am

with *you* alway, even to the end of the world." With whom! He does not say with one order of ministers in a higher sense, and with another in a lower sense. He promised to be with the apostles, and, by implication, with others after them who should possess the character of gospel ministers, and be engaged in carrying on, in a restricted sense, the great work which the apostles began. The promise may indeed be fulfilled in different measures, as other promises are. Ministers who are distinguished for their piety and faithfulness, such as Leighton, Scott, Cecil, Henry Martyn, Baxter, Edwards, Brainerd, Payson, Andrew Fuller, and Davies, will undoubtedly enjoy the presence of Christ in a higher degree, than ministers less pious and faithful. And this is *equally* true in regard to ministers of different denominations. The Lord Jesus Christ is a *Great King;* and in administering the affairs of his great kingdom, he does not proceed according to the narrow and exclusive notions which so often influence the minds of men. His thoughts and ways are exceedingly different from ours. Show me a gospel minister of whatever name, who is filled with the Holy Ghost, and preaches the truth in love and fidelity; and you show me one, to whom Christ will especially grant his promised presence. And surely the fulfilment of his promise manifests to whom he intended it should belong. For does he not act according to his intentions? I ask the pious author of the sermon before me, and other Episcopal ministers like him, whether it is not so. And they will permit me also to ask, whether they think their Blessed Lord is present with *them* because they are *Episcopalians*,— or, because they truly love him, and faithfully preach his gospel. If any of them say, for the former reason, that is, because they are *Episcopalians;* then, I ask, for what reason Christ is so evidently and so graciously present with those ministers who are *not* Episcopalians? But if they say, for the latter reason, that is, because they truly love him, and do the work of the ministry faithfully; then they will doubtless admit, that other ministers, possessing the *same character*, may regard the promise as made to *them* also, and may expect to realize its accomplishments. There are, besides bishops, multitudes of gospel ministers, who

have the heart and who do the work of true and faithful servants of Christ, and to whom he does in fact, and according to his intention, fulfil his precious promise. And if all that is implied in the promise has or may have its accomplishment in a succession of those whom the omniscient Redeemer regards and treats as good and faithful ministers, though *not bishops;* then the question returns; how does the promise prove a succession of bishops, in distinction from other gospel ministers? The promise of Christ is a matter of great *practical* moment; and I have chosen to treat it as such. And let me say again, so that it may not be forgotten; — if being included within the reach of this gracious promise, and enjoying the benefits of its fulfilment, proves men to be successors of the apostles; then faithful Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptist ministers are such successors, as truly as *bishops;* and the promise no more proves the continued existence of these, than of those. The fulfilment of the promise by the unchangeable Promiser, certainly shows how he intended his promise to be understood and applied. Pious and faithful bishops, such as are set before us in this sermon, are, I doubt not, in an important, though qualified sense, successors of the apostles, to whom the promise belongs. Pious and faithful presbyters and deacons in the Episcopal church, are also successors of the apostles. Otherwise how could they, equally with bishops, be entitled to the promise? Thus far the strong advocates of prelacy agree with us. And here they stop. But He who is Head over all things to the church, which he bought with his own blood, does not stop here. *They* limit the succession of true gospel ministers and the intent of Christ's promise to *bishops*, and those who are ordained by bishops. Not so with *him* who made the promise, and who has all power in heaven and earth. *He* speaks and acts on larger principles. There is nothing at all either in the language of the promise, or in its obvious meaning, or in the manner of its fulfilment, which restricts it to a succession of *bishops*, or which proves the existence of such a succession, any more than a succession of other gospel ministers. And if we would agree with our blessed Lord, — if we would have

our views and feelings correspond with his mind, as expressed in his word and providence; we must guard not only against pride and bitterness, but against all narrowness and bigotry and party spirit, and must pray for enlargement of heart, and must rejoice in the wide extent of Christ's promise, and in the length and breadth of his love.

It is in this way that I dispose of the passage quoted above, in which the author cites the promise of Christ, Matt. 28: 20, as a plain, conclusive argument, on which he confidently relies, to prove *the perpetual succession of bishops*. I maintain, that neither the occasion, nor the language of the promise, nor its obvious meaning, nor the facts of its accomplishment, prove any such thing. Episcopalians may affirm, that it is a principle settled and certain, that *bishops* are the only successors of the apostles, and that they and those ordained by them are the only authorized and lawful ministers of Christ. What I have aimed to show in these remarks, is, that this principle cannot be proved from the promise of Christ. And I can no more admit, that bishops and those who are ordained by them, are the only authorized and lawful ministers of Christ, than that hereditary kings and nobles are the only authorized and lawful rulers.

LECTURE CXXII.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY.

In the last Lecture, I stated it as my first reason against prelacy, that *it is not authorized by the Christian Scriptures.* In discussing this point, I referred you particularly to the *appointments* and *instructions* of Christ, during his public ministry on earth.

Let us now inquire whether anything favorable to prelacy can be found in the *Acts of the Apostles;* — anything in the conduct of those, whom Christ appointed to preach his gospel and propagate his religion, which implied, that there should be three orders in the ministry, and that one of these orders, namely, bishops, should exercise authority, not only over the churches, but over two subordinate orders of ministers. Had the apostles so understood the matter, they would doubtless have said or done something to show it. For they were commissioned and qualified to be witnesses and ministers of Christ, and, in his name, to teach the doctrines and laws of his kingdom, to establish churches, and to settle everything pertaining to their order and prosperity. And it was manifestly of great importance, that they should give a right direction to the great concerns of Christianity at the outset. What, I ask, is the practice of zealous bishops of the present day, who believe themselves called to fill an office similar to the apostles? Do they not on all occasions make the doctrine of prelacy very prominent? And if they go to places where Christ has not been known, and engage in the great work of preaching

the gospel and establishing churches; do they not, among *the very first things*, make known their principles of church government? And whenever they organize a church, do they not take good care to have those principles well understood, and to arrange everything according to the Episcopal plan? Their peculiar belief naturally leads to such a practice. And if their belief is right, their practice is right; and every one who honestly entertains that belief, will show it by his practice. But how was it with the apostles, who were called of God to take the lead in establishing the kingdom of Christ among Jews and gentiles, and who were responsible for giving, from the first, a right direction and form to the churches? If they had been led by the teaching of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit, to hold the ecclesiastical principles now held by Episcopalians; would they not have been as honest and faithful as Episcopalians now are; — and would they not have done, in some good measure, as Episcopalians do? Look, then, into the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and carefully notice their particular proceedings and instructions, and see whether they did as Episcopalians do; — see whether they did anything or taught anything, which shows, that they really meant to establish the Episcopal plan of church government. Do you find anything in the account given of the choice of one to fill the place of Judas? Do you find anything in the proceedings of the apostles on the day of Pentecost? Do you find anything in chapter vi, where we have an account of the choice of seven men, commonly called deacons, whom the apostles set apart to their work by prayer and the imposition of hands? What is there in this transaction, which is favorable to any part of the Episcopal plan of church polity? These deacons or servants of the church were chosen and set apart as *almoners*, that is, distributers of the charities of the church; not as an order of gospel ministers, or preachers, though some of them afterwards preached. But what resemblance has this transaction to the proceeding of bishops in ordaining those whom they call deacons, and who constitute the lowest order of Episcopal ministers?

In Acts xv. we are informed of disputes and difficulties which

arose at Antioch respecting circumcision, and of the manner in which they were adjusted. It was a very important affair, and required the exercise of the highest wisdom and the highest authority. But by whom was it decided? Not by a bishop; not by an apostle, nor by a number of apostles; but by the apostles, and elders, and "the whole church" at Jerusalem. Was there anything in the mode of proceeding on that occasion, which was in any respect like that which is marked out by the rules of the episcopal church. Was there any appearance of a prelate, either at Antioch or at Jerusalem? In those large churches, was there, in this important and difficult case, any exercise of prelatical authority, even by the apostles? But I shall have occasion to advert to this case again. All that my present object requires is to show, that what took place at Antioch and Jerusalem, as here related, gives no support to the Episcopal plan of church polity.

The next passage in the Acts, which relates to our subject, is chapter xx. The Apostle Paul gathered together the elders or presbyters of the church of Ephesus, that he might make his farewell address to them. But there is nothing in his address to those presbyters, or in what we learn of the state of things in the church at Ephesus, which can give any support to prelacy. Let any one carefully read this chapter, and then say, whether there is any reason to think, that Paul, who had a direct agency in the first formation of that church, which doubtless comprised several congregations, established different orders of ministers? Is there anything which implies, that one of those called elders, was invested with authority over the others? Taking everything into view, can we find the least evidence, that Paul did, what any Episcopal bishop would now do in a similar case, that is, that when he established the church or churches at Ephesus, he introduced prelacy, and that, among the officers of the church whom he addressed, there was a prelate, that is, a bishop, having authority over the presbyters? But this case will be brought up again under another head.

Let us now proceed to the epistles, and inquire whether *they* give any support to Episcopacy.

Paul directed his Epistle to the Philippians thus: "To all the saints at Philippi, with the *bishops* and *deacons*." This, you will see in a moment, is no argument for prelacy, as there is abundant evidence, Episcopalians themselves being judges, that *bishop* and *elder*, or *presbyter*, were used by the Apostle as synonymous terms. This appears also in his Epistle to Titus, chapter i. Paul directs Titus to ordain *elders*, adding a particular description of the qualifications which they must possess, and showing clearly, before he has done, that by bishop and elder he means the same officer. In Eph. 4: 11, the Apostle says, that Christ "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers — for the work of the ministry, etc." But what is there in all this, which is favorable to the Episcopal scheme? Here, indeed, *different orders* of ministers are mentioned; but they are *five* orders, not *three;* and there is no mention at all of the orders established in the Episcopal church, either bishops, presbyters, or deacons. Besides, the Apostle does not give the least intimation that one of these orders was set over the other orders. It will be natural to take this passage in connection with 1 Cor. 12: 28; "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Here are eight varieties. The first three are orders of ecclesiastical officers; but they have no correspondence with the three orders in the Episcopal church. The passage seems to be intended to mark *different classes of duties*, or *different departments of labor*, rather than different orders or ranks of church officers. If you will excuse me, I will attempt some illustration of the Apostle's meaning, by what exists in this Seminary. Here the officers are all Professors, all gospel ministers, all pastors and teachers; and all are of the same rank, and, in many respects, attend to the same duties. Yet they fill different departments, and with reference to those departments, they have different titles, marking the particular work assigned to them; as, Professor of Sacred Literature, Professor of the Hebrew Language and Literature, Professor of Christian Theology, Professor of Sacred Rhetoric, Professor of

Ecclesiastical History. But instead of this, they might, properly enough, be designated by five distinct names, as the Greek Exegete, (if I may coin a word,) the Hebrew Exegete, the Theologian, the Rhetorician, and the Historian ; — though it comes out, that they all, in a sort, teach exegesis, and Rhetoric, and History, and all, doubtless, are Theologians.

It may be thought that the case of Matthias, and Barnabas, and some others, who were called apostles, furnishes an argument in favor of prelacy. As to Matthias ; he was appointed to fill a vacancy made by the apostasy of Judas, and so came to be one of the twelve apostles, not a *successor* of the apostles. And it is very easy to account for it that Barnabas and others should be called apostles, on the ground of their being engaged as *missionaries* in the same general work of preaching the gospel with the apostles, and perhaps being endued with miraculous gifts; though the chief peculiarities of the apostolic office did not belong to them. At any rate, there is no evidence that they sustained an office like that of *prelates ;* and of course, they cannot be referred to as affording any support to prelacy.

Episcopalians have argued in favor of prelacy from 1 Tim. 1: 20. Paul, speaking of Hymenæus and Alexander, says: "Whom I delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." The sum of the argument is this: *Paul, in the exercise of his authority as an Apostle, administered church discipline upon two notorious offenders in the church at Ephesus. Bishops are the successors of the apostles, and are in this respect invested with the same authority ; and therefore it belongs to them to administer church discipline.* Let us examine this argument.

The punishment of these apostates at Ephesus, like that of the incestuous person at Corinth, was, I think, preternatural. The language plainly denotes something more than simple excommunication. The power of the Apostle to inflict such punishment, was miraculous, and was as real though not so remarkable an instance of supernatural agency, as the punishment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira. This miraculous power belonged preëminently to

the apostles. But surely the exercise of this power in some extraordinary cases was not intended to make void the precept of Christ in Matt. xviii, as to the ordinary treatment of offences. If the fact, that Paul, by his supernatural power, as an Apostle, inflicted such a punishment upon heinous offenders, proves anything relevant to the case in hand, it proves that modern bishops are competent to do the same as the apostles did. And if it proves this, it proves that bishops may now write inspired epistles as the apostles did.

Episcopalians hold, that the church at Ephesus had a bishop, that is, Timothy, as well as presbyters; and they hold that a bishop is entrusted with the same power of administering church discipline, as belonged to the apostles. Timothy, then, the bishop of Ephesus, had the power, and, no doubt, he knew that he had it. And if so, why did he not exercise it? And why did Paul, who had given it to the bishops, interfere with it?

According to the reasoning of Episcopalians, the Apostle's exercising the power of church discipline in this case, is a proof that it did not belong to the church, or the elders of the church. And does it not equally prove that it did not belong to the bishop? The argument then seems to stand thus: *A bishop, that is, Timothy, is a successor of the apostles, and is invested with the sole power of administering discipline in the church. But the Apostle comes forward, and exercises that power himself in the very diocese of Bishop Timothy; — which shows very clearly, they say, that the power does not belong either to the church, or to the presbyters; and, if the argument is straight, it shows equally that it does not belong to the bishop.*

If we should extend our inquiries further, the result would be the same; namely, that prelacy, as now understood and practised, is not founded upon the Christian Scriptures. The ablest advocates of prelacy do not pretend that it is. This is my first objection to the Episcopal scheme of ecclesiastical polity. And it is in my mind, an objection of no small weight. For it is to be kept in mind, that Christ was the Founder and Head of the church; and it is surely reasonable to suppose that he would, in

his own personal ministry, or by the ministry of those whom he appointed and qualified to act in his stead, do all which was necessary to the due establishment and subsequent prosperity of his kingdom on earth. It is certain that he and his inspired apostles knew what was necessary. And considering what their relation to the church was, and what was the work they undertook, and how deep an interest they felt in it, and how great their zeal and how constant their efforts for its full accomplishment; we must regard the *fact*, that there is nothing in their recorded instructions or acts which gives support to prelacy, as a clear indication that they did not look upon it as properly belonging to the Christian establishment. If then the matter ended here, and nothing more appeared than this absence of clear and explicit Scripture evidence in favor of prelacy; I should feel myself constrained to pause, and to ask, how could this be, if Christ and the apostles meant to establish prelacy in the church?

But the New Testament is not only destitute of evidence in favor of prelacy, but contains much evidence against it. This is my second reason against prelacy, namely, that *there is in the instructions of Christ, and in the instructions and acts of his apostles, evidence, direct and indirect, against the Episcopal scheme, both as to church discipline, and as to different orders in the ministry.*

The New Testament furnishes evidence against the Episcopal scheme, in regard to *the treatment of personal offences and other difficulties in the church.* On this subject Jesus Christ gave a particular direction to his disciples; Matt. 18: 15—17, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." This is a general direction from Christ himself for the treatment of offences. It manifestly had respect to future time; for there was not, as yet,

any regularly organized Christian church, that could act, as here required, in the business of discipline. The direction of Christ requires, that the church, that is, the assembly of believers, should ultimately hear, and judge, and act in regard to offences committed by its members. This mode of proceeding is palpably at variance with the system of Episcopacy, which places the government of the church, in this as well as in other respects, in the hands of the bishop. The parish minister may have a subordinate agency in the discipline of offenders. But ultimately the whole power belongs to the bishop. On this plan, the proceeding from beginning to end, must be different from that required by Christ. And to bring his direction to correspond with the Episcopal plan, you must make it stand thus: If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, etc. If he neglect to hear thee, take one or two others. — And if he neglect to hear them, tell it, — not to the church, but *to the minister of the parish, and, at last, to the bishop.* But the minister is not *the church*, and the *bishop* is not *the church.*

See now what was the judgment of the Apostle Paul, who had so important an agency in establishing Christian churches; and what direction he gave, in regard to the treatment of offences. A gross crime was committed by a member of the church at Corinth; and the Apostle directed the church, the whole church, to come together, and act in excluding the offender. Now what is there in the doings of any Episcopal church, which agrees with this apostolic direction? In what instance is the complaint against an offender brought before *the church* for decision? In what instance are the members of the church gathered together to act in cutting off a man from their fellowship? How is it that Episcopalians so easily overlook the direction of an apostle, and the example of a primitive church acting according to his direction, and then make so much of the opinions and conduct of erring Christians in after ages? If there were in the New Testament any precept or example as directly favorable to their scheme of church discipline, as the above precept and example are to ours; they would be quick to discover it, and would at once fix upon it

as an unfailing support to their principles. Should it be said by any one, that the Apostle in this case plainly asserted and exercised his authority over the Corinthian church, and was thus an example for prelates; my reply would be; — let prelates then take care to copy the Apostle's example, and exercise authority just as he did, not by a separate final act of their own, but by referring the business to the churches, and directing the members to come together to deliberate and act in excommunicating offenders.

The proceedings recorded in Acts xv. are evidently contrary to the Episcopal mode of church government. There was one *Apostle*, that is Paul, at Antioch, and there were *apostles* at Jerusalem. And we may be quite sure that these apostles, qualified as they were for their office, adopted a plan of proceeding, which was agreeable to the mind of Christ, and which may be regarded as a pattern for ministers and churches in subsequent ages. A dispute arose among the disciples at Antioch respecting circumcision. They finally sent Paul and Barnabas and *certain others* to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to attend to this matter. "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of *the church*, and of the apostles and elders." After Paul and Barnabas had stated the case to "*all the multitude*," that is, to the apostles and elders and *the church*, and after Peter and James had spoken on the question before them, their deliberations were brought to a happy close; and it pleased the apostles and elders, with the *whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company to communicate the result of their deliberations to the church at Antioch, that result being contained in a letter with this introduction: "The apostles and elders and *brethren* send greeting to the brethren at Antioch, etc."

In this remarkable case, we see how the concerns of the church were managed and how disputes and difficulties were adjusted in the primitive church. The apostles, though divinely commissioned and inspired, did not decide the question before them by their own authority, but chose to act in connection with the elders, or presbyters, and "*the whole Church*." And in the final result,

the elders and *the whole church* had a joint agency with the apostles.

Now what is there in any doings of the Episcopal church, which agrees with these transactions? Where do you find it recorded, that in removing difficulties and settling great ecclesiastical principles, the *brethren* of the Episcopal church in any place, *even in this Republic*, came together and joined with the bishops and presbyters in deliberating *freely, without being controlled by the will of any one*, on a question respecting the interests of religion, and in adopting the final decision? Place a bishop, if you will, on a level with the apostles; but why place him above them? Why should he, in such transactions, set aside the brethren of the church, and the elders too, and assert his supremacy over them, and act the part of dictator, when the apostles themselves, though invested with such high authority, did not proceed thus, but acted in concert with the elders and the whole church? Say, if you will, that the apostles, though they had a *right* to decide and act on the ground of their own plenary authority, intended by such a proceeding, to set an example of singular condescension and modesty. Why then do not bishops, who consider themselves successors of the apostles, copy so charming an example? The plain truth is, that there is a radical fault in the *system* of prelacy. That system does not agree with the teachings of the New Testament. When it was introduced, it was, as we shall see, an innovation upon the ecclesiastical order established and acted upon by the apostles. It was an innovation made by uninspired men, — good men, I admit, but as liable to error, as good men are now. The system held by Episcopalians, either as to the three orders of ministers, or the mode of conducting the affairs of the church, cannot be reconciled with the pattern showed us in the New Testament. It is not derived from the word of God. In the respects above mentioned, it is a continuation, for substance, of the system which existed so long in the Papal church, and the system of the Papal church grew out of the innovations and corruptions which were gradually introduced in ages long after the time of the apostles. Henry the Eighth did indeed, from personal con-

siderations, renounce the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. But so far as the church of England was concerned, he took the place of the Pope, that is, he became the Head of the church. And he with his bishops retained for their church, as any one may see, the essential features of the previous hierarchy, both as to ceremonies, and the orders of the Priesthood.

We have now touched upon the prominent passages in the New Testament, which relate directly to the manner of treating offences and removing disputes and dissensions occurring in the church. And I know not how to suppress the thoughts, which a review of these passages suggests to my mind.

Suppose, then, that the advocates of the Episcopal scheme of Ecclesiastical government at this day, could find in the gospel, that Jesus, who had a perfect knowledge of things to come, directed his followers, in case of an offence, to deal once and again with the offender in private, and if no satisfaction should be given for the offence, to tell it to the presbyter or the *bishop*, — not to the church, but to the presbyter or the *bishop;* would they pass over *such* a passage, as they do Matt. 18: 15—17? And suppose they should find in one of Paul's epistles, that he gave an express command to a *bishop*, — not to the members of the church assembled together, but to the *bishop*, "with the power of the Lord Jesus" to cut off an offender; would they pass over such a direction, as they do the direction of Paul to the members of the church of Corinth respecting the treatment of the incestuous person? And if they could find it related in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that an important and difficult question respecting the interests of the church was determined and settled, not by apostles and elders and all the church acting together, — but by a *bishop*, or several bishops united, — could Episcopalians find anything like this, would they pass over it, as they do the case mentioned in Acts xv.?

It has already been suggested, that any direction of Christ or any direction or act of his apostles respecting the transaction of business in the church, is binding upon us, unless such direction or act was grounded upon peculiar circumstances then existing, and

that circumstances so essentially different now exist, that we are evidently at liberty, and even required, to govern ourselves by other considerations. Let us inquire then, whether there is anything like this in the case now before us. Have circumstances so changed since the commencement of the Christian dispensation, that we are required, or left at liberty, to deviate from a direction of Christ, or a direction or example of an Apostle respecting the treatment of offences, or the conduct of other church affairs?

Now if there is in New England and in other parts of our country, a substantial reason at the present time, why the members of the church should be excluded from any agency in matters of discipline, and why the government of the church should be ultimately in the hands of the *bishop;* the reason must, I think, consist in one or more of the following facts; namely; that the interests of the church are essentially different from what they originally were, and consequently require a different management; or, secondly, that the members of the church are less competent than they originally were, to have an agency in the concerns of the church; or, thirdly, that the bishop is possessed of higher qualifications, and is of course, more competent to the government of the church, than he was at the beginning of the Christian dispensation; or, fourthly, that the state of civil society is here so different, as to require a change from the popular forms of church government to prelacy. Let us consider each of these.

First. Are the essential interests of the church different from what they were when Christianity was first established in the world? If any one affirms that this is the case, it will be incumbent on him to show in what respect those interests are different, and why they require different management. Till this is done, we cannot admit that the change referred to in the plan of church government, is either necessary or lawful.

Secondly. Is there reason to think, that the members of our churches generally are less competent to have a share in ecclesiastical government, than the members of the first churches at Jerusalem and at Corinth were? Are not Christians here as well educated, as much accustomed to think correctly, and as well

prepared for important duties, as those were, who had just emerged from Judaism or Paganism ?

Thirdly. Will any one maintain, that a bishop at this day is possessed of higher qualifications, and is more competent to the government of the church, than a bishop was in the church at Jerusalem, at Corinth, or at Antioch ? And is he more competent, than an inspired *apostle ?* You will keep in mind, that there were *apostles* there, but that no apostle undertook to decide upon the questions which came up at Jerusalem, except in concert with the presbyters and the brethren of the church. And as to the case of discipline at Corinth, *Paul* did not go there to manage it ; nor did he direct the *bishop* to manage it ; — (and doubtless the Corinthian church had a bishop ;) but he directed *the assembled church* to do it. The question is, whether a bishop now is better qualified to govern, than a primitive bishop, or an inspired apostle ?

Finally. Is the state of civil society in our country such, as to require a change from a popular form of church government to prelacy ? The question carries its own answer with it. If ecclesiastical government is to conform to civil government ; then, as civil government, in the time of the apostles, was in the hands of a *Monarch*, ecclesiastical government should certainly have been in the hands of a *prelate.* And as we live under a Republican government, (if this circumstance is to have influence,) it would seem to follow, that even if prelacy had been the original plan, it should now be changed to a popular shape. But what reason can you find in our *Republican* principles for a change from the original popular form of church government to an ecclesiastical monarchy, or aristocracy ?

We come therefore to the conclusion, that there has been no such change of circumstances, as to justify a deviation from the plan of church discipline, which was marked out by the instructions of Christ, and by the instructions and example of the apostles ; and, of course, that we are as much bound to conform to that plan, as primitive Christians were. My objection then against prelacy remains.

I now proceed to the other branch of my second objection,

namely, that the New Testament contains evidence, both direct and indirect, against the Episcopal scheme, in regard to *different orders in the ministry and the authority of bishops.*

It seems to me, that everything in the New Testament relative to the Christian ministry is different from what it would have been, if Christ and his apostles had intended to establish different orders, and to give one order authority over the others. The seventy disciples that Jesus sent forth were all of one order. So also were the twelve apostles. And Jesus took special pains to guard them against supposing, that one of them was to be superior in rank to the others. "Be not called masters," he said; "for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." And when some of them made the request, that they might be distinguished above their brethren; he rebuked them and said; "Ye know not what ye ask." He then proceeded to inform them, that it should not be among them as it was among the nations of the earth, where some are appointed to exercise lordship over others; that they should not aim at power, but should look upon each other as brethren and equals. If the Saviour and Head of the church had intended to establish prelacy, that would have been a very favorable opportunity for him to allude to the subject, and to signify, that although no distinction of rank should be made among the twelve apostles, who were to be his first ministers, it would be otherwise in subsequent times, and that the welfare of the church would ultimately require, that there should be three orders of ministers, the second being superior to the third, and the first having authority over both. Whereas all that he said on this occasion, was decidedly against any such distinction.

Proceed now to the Acts of the Apostles, and consider the passages, which most directly relate to the subject before us. The first is Acts 13: 1—3. In the church at Antioch, which doubtless comprised several congregations, there were certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, and Saul. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work

whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." The proceeding does not correspond at all with the Episcopal scheme. There was no one among them, so far as we can judge, who was superior in office to the others, and to whom the business was committed of separating Barnabas and Saul by prayer and the laying on of hands, and then sending them forth to the work of preaching the gospel among the heathen. No one of the twelve apostles was there. Saul was indeed called to be an Apostle in the highest sense. But it was he and Barnabas, that were to be set apart for the special work whereunto they were called. But was there any *prelate* there? Or did the Holy Ghost direct them to send for an Apostle, or for one whom the apostles had ordained as a prelate, to come and set apart Barnabas and Saul? Now I do not say that this was an *ordination* in the sense in which we commonly use the word. But I ask, whether any transaction like this takes place, or can take place, among modern Episcopalians; whether it would be consistent with their principles, that two of their young men should be solemnly set apart for the work of the gospel ministry among the heathen, by the laying on of the hands of those who are not bishops? And I ask, whether the Episcopal scheme and the Episcopal practice are not, in this matter, at variance with the proceedings of the first Christian churches?

It cannot be alleged, that these proceedings took place before there had been time to organize the churches, and to develop the real and ultimate design of Christ in regard to the ministerial office. For the apostles had been preaching about twelve years after the death of Christ, had established many churches, and had unquestionably given the necessary instruction relative to the permanent institutions of Christianity. The affairs of the church had, for many years, been receiving direction and form under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. And from the proceedings at Antioch in setting apart men to the gospel ministry among the heathen, we learn what that form was.

The next passage to which I refer, is Acts xx. Paul gathered

the elders or presbyters of the church at Ephesus, and said to them: "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you ἐπίσκοπους, bishops." The *presbyters* were *bishops*. The two words were used interchangeably. They were applied to the same men, and denoted the same office. Now Paul had been at Ephesus no less than three years, and had done what he deemed necessary for the establishment of gospel order. The church at Ephesus was a large church, consisting doubtless of several congregations, and having several bishops, or presbyters; all, however, forming one church. Now, why had not Paul, during his long stay there, and in the first organization of the church, in which it was so important that everything should be done right,— why had he not appointed a prelate for Ephesus, who should have authority over the other bishops, or presbyters, and a general supervision over the whole church? This certainly would have been done by any one who entertained the views of our prelates. Why had not Paul done it? Or if he had done it, why does it not appear? Why is it not said he sent and called the *bishop* and the *presbyters?* And why is it not said that he addressed himself to them distinctly, as any bishop would now do, charging the *prelate* to maintain a faithful care and government over the other orders of ministers, and charging the presbyters to be faithful in their respective congregations, and to show due honor and submission to their bishop? If Paul agreed with Episcopalians in *principle*, why did he not agree with them in *practice?* And if Episcopalians differ from the Apostle in *practice*, is it not probable they differ from him in principle too?

I argue against the doctrine of prelacy from Paul's Epistle to Titus, Chap. 1: 5, 7. He directed Titus to ordain presbyters in every city, and specified the qualifications they should possess; and then suggests to Titus the reason for such care as to the character of a presbyter. "For a *bishop* must be blameless, etc." The whole passage makes it certain that the Apostle meant the same officer by presbyter and by bishop.

The address of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians implies something unfavorable to prelacy. "To all the saints at Philippi,

with the bishops and deacons." The bishops were just such church officers, as those at Ephesus, who were first called presbyters, and then bishops. You observe, they were bishops,—not *a bishop*, but *bishops*,—and bishops of the same church or collection of churches, or, if you please, bishops of the same diocese. It would suit the views of Episcopalians far better, had the Apostle directed his Epistle thus: "To all the saints at Philippi, with *the bishop*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*."

As to deacons; all we have to do is to find what information the New Testament gives. They were *servants*, or *ministers*, as the word signifies. It is applied to Phebe, Rom. 16: 1, who in a more private way ministered to the saints. It is often applied to the apostles. See 1 Cor. 3: 5. 2 Cor. 3: 6. It is applied to Timothy, 1 Thess. 3: 2; to Tychicus, Eph. 6: 21, and to Epaphras, Coloss. 1: 7. Thus it appears, that the apostles and other ministers were familiarly called deacons, i. e. *servants*. This is the general use of the word in the New Testament. In 1 Tim. iii, bishops and deacons are mentioned and described distinctly, implying that they were employed, in different departments of labor. But what evidence is there, that the deacons, were subject to the bishops? What evidence is there that the bishops had authority over *them*. This cannot be inferred from the name. They were indeed called *deacons*, or *servants;* and so were Timothy and Tychicus, and so were the apostles. And while the deacons described by Paul, 1 Tim. iii, were truly *servants*, they were servants of Christ, but are never said to be servants of a bishop.

1 Tim. 4: 14. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*." *Presbytery* denotes *an assembly of presbyters*. These laid their hands on Timothy, and thus inducted him into his office. Presbyterians and Congregationalists naturally adopt this language in giving an account of their ordinations. The passage is plainly in favor of ordination by a council of presbyters. But it is against the notion of ordination by a prelate. And Episcopalians do not naturally describe their ordinations in this way.

They refer you at once to 2 Tim. 1: 6, where the Apostle speaks of the gift which was in Timothy, by the laying on of *his* hands. This passage unquestionably implies, that Paul joined with the presbyters in ordaining Timothy by the imposition of hands. But there is no evidence from the two passages taken together, or from anything else, that the presbyters had not as good a right to ordain by the laying on of hands, or as real a concern in conferring the gift spoken of, as the Apostle had. The gift came indeed from above, and was ascribed to human agency in only a secondary sense. But it was ascribed to the presbytery, as much as to Paul. And it was thus ascribed to the presbytery by Paul himself.

1 Pet. 5: 1—3. Peter evidently agrees with Paul in regard to the subject under consideration. He here addresses elders, or presbyters, calling himself an elder, and then exhorts them *to do the work of bishops*, ἐπισκοποῦντες; clearly identifying the office of bishop and elder. A bishop, according to the New Testament use, was a minister and overseer of a church, not an overseer of presbyters. Presbyters were bishops, and bishops were presbyters. The language of the apostles makes it evident, that they considered all ministers on a footing of equality. They mention no such officer as a *prelate*, that is, a bishop which had authority over a number of churches, and over other bishops.

This is acknowledged by many Episcopalians. Bishop Burnet says: "I acknowledge the office of bishop and presbyter to be one and the same office." Dr. Reynolds, former Professor of Divinity in Oxford, says, that all who labored for hundreds of years before him taught, that all pastors, whether entitled bishops or presbyters, have equal power and authority *by God's word*. And he declares this to be the common judgment of the Reformed churches in Switzerland, Savoy, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England. And in a work called "The Institution of the Christian man," expressly approved by Cranmer, Jewell, Willet, and Stillingfleet, together with the King and Parliament, and the main body of the English clergy, is this declaration: "In the New Testament there is no

mention of any other degrees, but of *deacons* or *ministers*, and of *presbyters* or *bishops*." Burnet says: "The *King* gave bishops their power to ordain ministers, to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and to perform all other parts of the Episcopal function." Dr. Holland, King's Professor at Oxford, says: "To affirm the office of bishop to be different from that of presbyter, and superior to it, is most false, — contrary to Scripture, to the fathers, to the doctrine of the church of England, yea, to the very schoolmen themselves." The Editors of the Christian Observer, 1804, say: "Episcopalians found not the merits of their cause upon any express injunction or delineation of ecclesiastical government *in the Scriptures;* for there is none." I shall add a recent testimony. Bishop Onderdonk says, that "in the New Testament, the name, bishop, is given to the middle order, or presbyters; and that all which we read in the New Testament concerning bishops, — is to be regarded as pertaining to that middle grade." "It was," he says, "after the apostolic age, that the name bishop was taken from the second order, and appropriated to the first."

LECTURE CXXIII.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY.

We have seen that the New Testament, instead of supporting the Episcopal scheme, furnishes evidence against it. This is acknowledged by many Episcopalians.

Here our inquiries might end. For the Holy Scriptures must be our guide on this subject, as well as on any other. If the authorized founders and guides of the church saw proper to establish general principles of church government, those principles should govern us. Now, if I mistake not, it has been made evident, that presbyters and bishops were originally officers of the same order; and that the members of the church should act in matters of discipline.

The great reason which is urged by Episcopalians to justify them in departing from the Scripture standard and in establishing prelacy, is, that prelacy was introduced at an early period in the Christian church.

I encounter this argument at once with several inquiries.

First. Were the early fathers guided by divine inspiration, and thus qualified and authorized, as infallible guides, to make alterations in the order which the apostles had established? If they were, then we ought to submit to their decision as readily, as to the decision of the apostles. But this no one maintains.

Secondly. Were the early Christian fathers *instructed by the apostles* to make the alteration intended, and to introduce prelacy? If there is any evidence of this, it must be found either in

the instructions of the apostles recorded in the Scriptures, or in the testimony of the early fathers, that they received *oral* instructions from the apostles in favor of such a change, though the instructions were not recorded.

Let us look at the first of these suppositions. In the Acts of the Apostles and in the epistles, we have particular instructions in regard both to the ministry and the church. But does it appear that they said, or in any way intimated, that although, for the time being, they established only one order of ministers, called presbyters or bishops, they would have three orders established in following ages? They directed that presbyters should be ordained in every city. But did they signify that, after a while, a prelate should be ordained over presbyters? The subject being of great importance, it is reasonable to think that something, like what I have suggested, would have been found in some part of the New Testament, if the mind of the apostles had been in favor of the change alluded to. But where do you find it?

Look then at the other supposition. Do the early fathers testify, that the apostles gave *oral* instructions, which are not recorded, that there should be three orders in the ministry? Do they inform us, that there was an unwritten tradition handed down from the apostles in favor of prelacy? In the writings of the Christian fathers there is, in my judgment, no evidence of this, but much to the contrary. I cannot go into an examination of this subject, but others have done it. And I recommend to you a careful perusal of the best works which have been written on both sides of the question.

But *early practice* is appealed to. Prelacy, it is said, generally prevailed very early; and it can hardly be supposed that this would have been the case, without some warrant from the apostles.

It is admitted that prelacy did at length obtain a general prevalence in the church. But it is important to inquire, *when* it thus prevailed. There is clear evidence, that during the age of the apostles, and for more than fifty years after, the churches were taught and governed by presbyters; that those

who were called bishops, were the same as presbyters, and were pastors and overseers of particular churches, and that there was no officer of superior rank, having authority over inferior orders of ministers; and also that the members of the church acted in matters of discipline, according to the direction of Christ in Matt. xviii. But instead of undertaking to present this evidence before you in detail, I can do little more than state the positions which I think tenable, and refer you to several works of a high character, in which the subject is handled particularly and fully.

Pedobaptists have sometimes been charged with an inconsistency, because they derive an argument in support of Infant Baptism from Ecclesiastical History, and yet deny the force of the same argument when urged in support of prelacy.

A statement of the case, just as it is, will show, that the charge has no foundation.

The chief historical evidence in favor of Infant Baptism does not, in my view, arise from the fact, that the practice did at length generally prevail in the early ages; but from *the testimony of the fathers, that it was received from the apostles.* In their practice, early Christians did, in many things, deviate from the principles established by the apostles. Hence it is evident, that the mere prevalence of any practice in the fourth, third, or second century, cannot be considered as proving its divine origin. But it is admitted on all hands, that the Christian fathers were upright men, and that *their testimony*, as to matters of fact within their knowledge, is worthy to be relied upon. Now it was doubtless known among them, what the apostolic institutions were; just as it is known among us, what were the original institutions of our Puritan forefathers in New England. Those who lived in the second, third, and fourth centuries had such means of information, that they cannot be supposed to have fallen into any mistake. They were honest men, and cannot be supposed to have given a false testimony. And their testimony is, not only that Infant Baptism was universally practised among Christians, but that it was *delivered to the churches by the apostles.* It is chiefly from *this testimony as to the origin of the practice*, and not from the

mere fact of its prevalence, that I would argue in support of Infant Baptism. Now to make the cases parallel, you must have the testimony of Christian fathers not only that prelacy generally prevailed at such a time, but that it was handed down, as a divine ordinance, from the apostles. You must have their testimony, that prelacy had uniformly existed in the Christian church, and *was received from the inspired apostles as a permanent institution.* If such a testimony could be produced, who would not acknowledge its weight?

But we have testimony that prelacy was *not* received from the apostles. And to place the historical argument for Infant Baptism on the same footing with this, it must be shown that, while Infant Baptism was universally practised in the days of Origen, Augustine, Pelagius, Tertullian, etc., the fathers, at least some of them, declared, that it was not the practice in the Christian church originally, but was, for special reasons, introduced afterwards. If any evidence like this could be adduced, we should be obliged to abandon the historical argument for Infant Baptism, and to acknowledge that, so far as the testimony of the fathers goes, the Baptists are right.

In opposition to prelacy, we have just such testimony from the fathers, as I have hinted at. Chrysostom says: "The presbyters were formerly called bishops; and the bishops, presbyters." Theodoret says: "Those who were called bishops evidently held the rank of presbyters." But Jerome, who lived in the latter part of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, gives the most particular testimony. "In the judgment of Erasmus, Jerome was without controversy by far the most learned and most eloquent of all the Christians, and the prince of Christian divines;" and he was unquestionably familiar with the history of the Christian church from the beginning. His testimony is found in his Annotations on Paul's Epistle to Titus, where he gives an account of the nature and origin of the office of a bishop. He says: "A presbyter is the same as a bishop. And until there arose divisions in religion, churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. But *afterwards*, it was everywhere decreed,

that one person, elected from the presbyters, should be placed over the others." Referring to Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, which was addressed to the saints "with the bishops and deacons," he observes; "Philippi is a single city of Macedonia; and certainly there could not have been several like those who are now called bishops, at one time in the same city. But as, at that time, they called the same bishops, whom they styled presbyters also, the apostles spoke indifferently of bishops as of presbyters." Jerome alludes to the fact, that Paul, having sent for the presbyters of the single city of Ephesus, afterwards speaks of them as bishops; and he refers also to what Peter says: "The presbyters who are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter. — Feed the flock of God — taking the oversight, ἐπισκοποῦντες, *exercising the office of a bishop*, etc." "These things," Jerome says, "we have brought forward to show that, *with the ancients*, presbyters were the same as bishops. *But in order that the roots of dissension might be plucked up, a usage gradually took place, that the whole care should devolve upon one.* Therefore, as the presbyters know, that it is *by the custom of the church* that they are subject to him who is placed over them; so let bishops know, that they are above presbyters rather *by custom* than by the truth of our Lord's appointment."

Many of the advocates of prelacy in the English church, as well as elsewhere, admit the identity of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church, and that the distinction, which prevailed in the third and fourth centuries, was unknown for a long time after the Christian church was founded by the apostles.

I have said, that the *mere practice* of the ancient church cannot in any case be adduced, as conclusive evidence of a divine institution. But in regard even to ancient practice, there is an obvious difference between Infant Baptism and prelacy. In the first place; there is evidence that Infant Baptism was practised universally in the early churches; while there is no such evidence, but the contrary, in regard to prelacy. Secondly; there is clear evidence, that prelacy was gradually introduced long after the age of the apostles, with a view to remedy existing evils. But

there is no evidence that Infant Baptism was thus gradually introduced, or introduced at all, after the time of the apostles. So that the argument, which is grounded upon ancient practice merely, though by no means conclusive, is yet of more weight in favor of Infant Baptism, than of prelacy.

Suppose now that the facts in the case were different from what they are. Suppose that respectable writers among the Christian fathers had given a testimony to the apostolic origin of prelacy, like that which they have given against it. Suppose Chrysostom, instead of saying, that presbyters were formerly called bishops, and bishops presbyters, had said, that bishops from the beginning were superior to presbyters. And suppose, that Theodoret, instead of saying; "those who were called bishops, evidently held the rank of presbyters," had said, that bishops evidently held a rank above presbyters. And suppose that such a man as Jerome, instead of saying what I have quoted from his Annotations, had said, that a presbyter was *not* the same as a bishop, and that, from the beginning, the churches were governed, *not* by presbyters, but by a *bishop*. And suppose he had said, *not* that a usage, after a while, gradually took place, but that it was a usage *from the first* that the whole care of the churches devolved upon one, and that it was always the case, that one was chosen from among the presbyters to be placed over the others. And, instead of inculcating *humility* upon *bishops* from the consideration, that they are above presbyters rather by custom, than by the truth of the Lord's appointment, suppose he had inculcated *submission* upon *presbyters*, from the consideration that bishops were placed over them not merely by common custom, but by the Lord's appointment; — suppose that these and other ancient fathers had thus given the very same testimony in favor of the apostolic origin of prelacy, as they actually gave against it; would not the advocates of prelacy feel, that they were in possession of a new and powerful argument, and that all the world must acknowledge their cause to be founded upon a rock?

But I meet the argument from *early practice* in another way. Suppose then, that prelacy was in fact introduced soon after the

age of the apostles, and was extended rapidly through the Christian world. My question is, on what grounds the practice of uninspired men can bind us? The apostles mourned over the ignorance, the superstition, the party spirit and strife, that appeared in the churches which they had planted, and even among the religious teachers who lived in their day; and they bore a solemn testimony against evils so dishonorable to the character of Christians. And can you think it is the will of God, that we should regard those as safe guides, who were so prone to corrupt the simplicity of the gospel, and to run into all sorts of disorder, as many of the churches of Asia did even in the apostolic age? There were indeed faithful ministers and Christians. And such are found at the present day. But does the piety and fidelity of ministers and Christians render them infallible, and authorize them to unsettle what the apostles settled? Does it invest them with power to control our opinions or our practice? Are we to follow *them*, any further than they followed Christ and the apostles? And when we find uninspired men differ among themselves, as they always have done, especially in regard to church government; to which of them shall we submit? Some say, *to the most ancient — to those who lived nearest to the apostles.* But what special title had they to dictate to those who should come after them? Were there not errors and corruptions among them? And why is it not just as proper and necessary for us to examine their opinions and practices, and to receive or reject them according as they agree or disagree with the word of God, as it is that we should treat the opinions and practices of modern divines in this manner? Who will assert, that uninspired men in the primitive church, — men just recovered from the errors of judaism and paganism, subject to so much ignorance and prejudice, and exposed to so many influences adverse to the purity of our religion, — who will assert that such men are entitled to our veneration and confidence, above the best men that have lived since the Reformation? If we were reduced to the necessity of following uninspired teachers of religion; who of us would not prefer Calvin, Leighton and Scott, Howe, Edwards and Dwight, before Tertullian, Cyril and Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine?

The remarkable saying of Tertullian has been often repeated; "Whatever is *first* is *true;* whatever is *later* is *false.*" Look at this a moment. The traditions of the Jews, which made void the law of God were "*first;*" and Christ's sermon on the mount was "*later.*" It may be said, the law of God was still "*first,*" and those traditions "*later.*" This I admit. And I say too, that the New Testament Scriptures were "*first,*" and the writings of the early fathers "*later.*" The rule of Tertullian is sometimes right, and sometimes wrong. It is not a fact, that men were, in all cases, nearer to the truth, in proportion as they lived nearer to the time of the apostles. Who will say, that the Catholic writers, who supported all the corruptions of the Church of Rome previously to the Reformation, were nearer to the truth, than the great lights of the Reformed churches?

Some think, that those opinions and practices, in which *the fathers all agreed,* must correspond with the instructions of the apostles. In regard to this, I remark, first, that the fathers were all agreed on hardly any subject, certainly not on the subject now under consideration. But, secondly, if they had all been agreed, it would prove nothing to the purpose. For if a few good men may agree in adopting a particular error, why may not many? We well know that the fathers generally fell into palpable mistakes on moral and religious subjects. And can we set limits to the number of uninspired men, who, under the influence of their own imperfections, and of unpropitious outward circumstances, may fall into false opinions or wrong practices? We can never safely make it our rule to follow the multitude. If you could argue in favor of prelacy, that it was universally adopted in the fourth, the third, and even the second century, I could by no means admit the validity of the argument, but should still maintain, that no agreement of *uninspired* men, unsupported by the Scriptures, can be obligatory on us. In direct opposition to the dogma of the Romish church, I hold that the Scriptures themselves are, to all Christians, the sufficient and only authoritative rule of faith and practice.

But here you may ask, whether there was not such *a change*

of circumstances, as justified the fathers in departing from the instructions and the example of the apostles. We have already considered this general question in relation to *church discipline*. We are now to consider it in relation to *different orders in the ministry, and the authority of a prelate*.

The parity of ministers which was established by the apostles, must have been just and proper at the time; because the apostles were infallible. And it must be just and proper at all times, unless such circumstances occur, as plainly show it to be the will of God, that prelacy should be introduced. Is it then a fact, that such circumstances have occurred? And particularly, did they occur during the period when prelacy was first introduced, that is, during one or two hundred years after the apostolic age? And was there at that time any sufficient reason for the change?

The chief reason for establishing prelacy according to Jerome, and other Christian fathers, was, that *divisions and disorders prevailed*, and it was thought these evils might be avoided by investing some ministers with higher power, and making them *overseers* or *bishops*, not only over the churches, but *over other ministers*. Was this a sufficient reason for the change?

Here consider, that great divisions and irregularities early appeared in the churches which the apostles planted, and over which they extended their watchful care. This was specially the case in the Corinthian church. With what sorrow did Paul notice the disorders which had crept into that church, or that cluster of churches; and with what earnestness did he labor to put an end to them! And he was so under the guidance of that wisdom which is from above, that he must have known what means would be best adapted to remove those hurtful disorders. Why did he not hit upon the expedient, which Episcopalians would instantly resort to in any such case? Why did he not tell the Corinthians, that common ministers and members of the church had too much concern in administering their affairs, and that, if they would keep things in order, they must have a bishop, who should have power to rule over the churches, and over other ministers? There was, at that time, the very reason for intro-

ducing prelacy, which has been considered most weighty. It was a very favorable opportunity to make the change. The Apostle was alive, and had power to do the very thing which was called for. The reason for a more energetic government existed in all its strength; and the Apostle knew it. They were carnal. There was envying and strife, and division among them; they were formed into parties, each party setting up its own favorite teacher; there were immoralities in the church; and they were guilty of shocking irregularities even while commemorating the death of Christ. The Apostle knew all these disorders, and he knew what was the best way to remedy them, and to promote the welfare of the church. And it was the easiest thing in the world for the great Apostle to say, if he had only thought so; — *you have tried the principle of equality among ministers, and popular proceedings in the church, long enough. You cannot succeed, while there are so many concerned in the government. You must have a bishop.* But the Apostle did not think so. Amid all his advices to the Corinthians, he did not advise this. He had seen what evils prevailed, and he clearly foresaw what divisions and strifes would disturb the churches after his decease. But so it was, that he never gave them the least hint in favor of prelacy.

It may perhaps be alleged, that those disorders, which called for a change of government afterwards increased. Doubtless this was the case. And the apostles knew it would be so. And they were authorized to do whatever the order and prosperity of the church then required, and whatever it would require in time to come. It was perfectly within their province, to give instructions for the use of Christians through all ages. In many respects they actually did this. Why did they not say something in favor of prelacy? If they saw that this was an establishment which would be called for in following ages, though not called for at that time; why did they not leave a direction to this effect, — that when circumstances should require it, ministers and churches should introduce prelacy, or, at least should have liberty to do it?

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that the introduction of prelacy in times subsequent to the apostles, was an innovation

wholly unauthorized, — a measure founded on reasons, which the apostles themselves had fully considered, but which they did not regard as favoring such a change. The measure was evidently adopted from the faulty inclination so frequently found even in good men, to overlook the divine directions, and to think themselves able to improve the simple institutions of the New Testament.

The early Christian fathers were certainly fallible. And one of the great mistakes which they made was, their supposing that the evils which they wished to remedy, arose from a defect in the system of ecclesiastical order which was established by Christ and the apostles. Had this really been the case; then some alteration in that system might have answered the purpose intended. But the dissensions and party strife which prevailed, sprung from another source, that is the corrupt inclinations of men. This is what we are expressly taught by the Apostle, who says to the Corinthian church with reference to this very subject: "ye are yet carnal;" that is, under the influence of corrupt, earthly affection. "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions; are ye not carnal and walk as men?" It was this carnal, sinful state of Christians, not the want of a bishop, which was the source of the evils complained of. Accordingly when the Apostle strives most earnestly to remedy these evils, he does not recommend any change whatever in the plan of church government. And you will observe that, instead of proposing that one church officer should be invested with authority over others, he really teaches the contrary, laboring to make the impression, that the ministers of religion, even Paul and Apollos and Cephas, are in themselves nothing, and can do nothing; that their success depends wholly on God; that they are all fellow-laborers and fellow-servants of Christ, and therefore that one of them should not be set up above others. Instead of giving advice to the Corinthians, to put down their dissensions by establishing a superior order in the ministry, and a more consolidated government in the church, he deals plainly and faithfully with their hearts, and tells them that the disorders of which he com-

plains, originated there. He teaches that the way to rid themselves of the evils existing among them is to subdue that *spiritual evil* from which they sprung.

Let not the lesson here taught, be forgotten. If you suppose, that the disorders which have existed and the unhappy events which have taken place in the Puritan churches and among the Puritan ministers of New England, have sprung from defects in our plan of Church Government, and that a remedy may be found in the adoption of an essentially different plan; you have, in my apprehension, fallen into a great mistake. There may indeed be faults, as I doubt not there are, in our system of ecclesiastical polity, and these faults may have more or less augmented the evils complained of; and in relation to this matter, the Head of the Church may call us to some special duties. But the principal source of the evils lies in the faulty dipositions and characters of ministers and church members. Were ministers and Christians right, — did they bear the image of Christ, and abound in the fruits of the Spirit; they would honor God, and be peaceful, orderly and happy, although their form of government may be imperfect. But if they are essentially wanting in these moral excellencies, — if, like Christians at Corinth, they are carnal and walk as unsanctified men; evils will come. It is in vain to expect that, by any change in outward forms, and particularly by a change unauthorized by the word of God, we can prevent those disorders, which arise from the corruptions of men. The Christian fathers thought they could cure prevailing divisions and wicked practices among Christians by changing the form of church government, and by giving higher, and still higher authority to bishops. But did they succeed? Did disorder and immorality subside? Or did they grow less in proportion as the power of hierarchs was increased? How was it, when ecclesiastical government was most completely consolidated, and THE CHIEF BISHOP was invested with plenary authority, not only over churches and priests, but over kings and emperors? When was it that moral evils the most tremendous overspread the nations of Christendom? And what was the actual result of the prela-

tical scheme of church government, from its commencement and gradual spread in ages subsequent to the apostles, to the period of its highest supremacy just before the Reformation? Prelacy certainly had a long and thorough trial. And what was the result?

I have been willing to admit, for the sake of argument, that prelacy was introduced in the period immediately succeeding the apostles.

But I have admitted too much. And I must here state it, as another serious objection against prelacy, that it does as really fail of being supported by the practice of the primitive church immediately following the apostles, as by the apostles themselves.

If the Episcopal scheme had prevailed at that early period, it would seem to furnish a plausible argument in its favor; as it might be alleged, that those Christians who lived at that time, and some of whom had even been personally acquainted with the apostles, undoubtedly knew what the mind of the apostles was, and were disposed to conform to it. But it has been clearly shown by different writers, and acknowledged by many Episcopalians, that prelacy has not the benefit of this argument. I have no time to go into a particular consideration of the merits of the case; and must content myself, according to a previous suggestion, with merely laying before you, in a few simple propositions, what have been the results of the most laborious and candid investigation of the subject; referring you to the works in which the investigation is found.

1. No satisfactory proof can be derived from Ecclesiastical History, that prelacy prevailed more or less during the first century. The Letters of Ignatius, it is well known, are of such doubtful authority, that they cannot be properly appealed to in this controversy. Clement's Letters, which are allowed to be genuine, and which were written near the close of the first century, contain evidence against the existence of prelacy at that time. See quotations from Clement's Letters, in Coleman's Primitive Church, p. 164, 5.

2. There is no clear evidence that prelacy prevailed, during the first half of the second century. The fathers, who lived at that

period, have left nothing that favors the idea that this was the case; and the writings of those who followed, contain much evidence to the contrary. The supposition of some Episcopalians, that the apostles gave oral instructions, which are not recorded, but which were of divine authority, and were carried into effect by those who came after them, has nothing to support it, or to render it even probable. If there were any such instructions, who were the men that must have received them, and that must have remembered and executed them, except those who had a personal intercourse with the apostles? But as it is evident that neither they nor their immediate successors did execute any such instructions; we conclude that no such instructions had been received. For who would be willing to charge the early fathers with neglecting, for fifty years, instructions which some of them had received, and which all of them knew had been received, from the lips of the apostles? That the apostles gave directions in favor of prelacy, which were to remain unexecuted till a distant future time, is utterly incredible. But there is positive evidence, that during the first half of the second century it was as it had been before; — that the same officers, without distinction of rank, were called bishops and presbyters interchangeably, and that the members of the church had an important agency in disciplining offenders, and in managing other ecclesiastical affairs.

3. When prelacy was introduced, in the latter part of the second or beginning of the third century, it was introduced very gradually. And for some time after bishops began to be distinguished above their brethren, it was only a temporary or occasional distinction, — much like the distinction which is now conferred on those who are made Moderators or Presidents of ecclesiastical Assemblies, — those bishops still having a permanent oversight over single churches, not over a diocese, and claiming no exclusive right of ordination. There was nothing which had the essential features of what is now called prelacy, for at least two hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era. And while modern Episcopalians can plead in defence of their scheme, the general practice of the church in the fourth and fifth and following

centuries, they cannot plead that such a practice gained footing, more or less, in the *earliest* periods of the church. Accordingly, when they speak of *primitive* practice as in their favor, they ought in justice to say, that they use the word *primitive* with great latitude, and not as relating to any time previous to the latter part of the second or beginning of the third century. What is most properly called *primitive*, they cannot claim. — When any man in New England says, that it was the *primitive* practice of the Puritans to keep the Sabbath very strictly, and to take special pains for the education of the young; is he not understood by every one to refer to their practice the first forty or fifty years after their arrival here? And should we not think him guilty of impropriety, if he should assert that this or that was the *primitive* practice of the Puritans in New England, when there was no such practice for the first half century and more, and the practice spoken of was introduced gradually afterwards, and was a real innovation upon primitive usage, and a palpable departure from it? *Primitive* practice is the *original* or *first* practice.

The following are the principal works to which I must refer those, who wish to pursue the examination of the subject more particularly and fully, than I am able to do in these Lectures.

Jerome's Annotations on the Epistle to Titus. Neander's History of the Christian Church, and his Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles. Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. Chauncy's Views of Episcopacy. Inquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church, by Sir Peter King, Chancellor of England. Review of Essays on Episcopacy, by Dr. Mason in the Christian Magazine. Miller's Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry. Goode's Divine Rule of Faith and Practice, particularly Vol. II. Smyth on Presbytery and Prelacy. Barnes's Apostolic Church. Coleman's Primitive Church.

LECTURE CXXIV.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT. PRELACY.

THE *Episcopal doctrine of Apostolic Succession*, as now held by one part of Episcopal ministers in England and America, is rejected by another part. The doctrine I understand to be this; that the blessings of the Christian dispensation are restricted chiefly, if not wholly, to the channel of a ministry episcopally ordained; that no one is a true minister of the gospel, unless he has been ordained by a bishop, consecrated by another bishop, and he by another, and so on through an unbroken series of duly consecrated bishops extending back to the apostles; that no ministers who are not found in that line of succession, have a right to preach, or to administer the sacraments; that if non-episcopal ministers undertake to preach and administer the sacraments, they assume what does not belong to them, and their ministrations must be expected to prove inefficacious, as they have not received and cannot communicate the sacramental virtue; that whatever their intellectual and spiritual qualifications may be, they are not true Christian ministers; while those who have been Episcopally ordained are to be acknowledged as true ministers of Christ, however destitute of knowledge and piety.

There are some doctrines which are so extravagant, that the bare statement of them is, with all intelligent and unprejudiced persons, a sufficient confutation. And I think this doctrine is nearly of this character.

All that my limits permit me to do, will be to make some quo-

tations from writers of the highest reputation, with a few remarks of my own.

"Whether we consider the palpable absurdity of this doctrine, its utter destitution of historical evidence, or the outrage it implies on all Christian charity, it is equally revolting. The arguments against it are infinite; the evidence for it absolutely nothing. It rests not upon one doubtful assumption, but upon fifty. First, the very basis on which it rests — the claim of Episcopacy to be considered undoubtedly and exclusively of apostolical origin — has been most fiercely disputed by men of equal erudition and acuteness, and, so far as can be judged, of equal integrity and piety. And one would think that the only lesson, which could be learned from the controversy, would be the duty of mutual charity, and a disposition to concede, that the blessings of Christianity are compatible with various systems of church polity. God forbid that we should for a moment admit that they are restricted to any one. — But this first proposition, however doubtful, is susceptible of evidence almost demonstrative, compared with that offered for half a dozen others involved in the integral reception of the doctrine of apostolical succession. Accordingly, there are thousands of Episcopalians, who, while they affirm a preponderance of evidence in favor of Episcopacy, contemptuously repudiate this incomprehensible dogma. — The theory is, that each bishop, from the apostolic times, has received in his consecration a mysterious 'gift,' and also transmits to every priest at his ordination a mysterious 'gift,' indicated by the awful words, *Receive the Holy Ghost;* that on this the right of priests to assume their functions, and the preternatural grace of the sacraments administered by them, depends; that bishops, once consecrated, instantly become invested with the remarkable property of transmitting the 'gift' to others; — that this high gift has been incorruptibly transmitted — from the primitive age till now — through the hands of impure, profligate, and heretical ecclesiastics; — and that it is perfectly irrespective of the moral character and qualifications of both bishop and priest."

"Numberless are the questions which reason and charity forth-

with put to the advocates of this doctrine. What is imparted? What transmitted? — Is consecration or ordination accompanied, (as in primitive times,) by miraculous powers, by any invigoration of intellect, by increase of knowledge, by greater purity of heart? It is not pretended. Do the parties themselves profess to be *conscious* of receiving the gift? No. Is the conveyance made evident to us by any proof, which certifies any fact whatsoever, by sense, experience, or consciousness? It is not affirmed."

"Again, who can certify that this gift has been incorruptibly transmitted, through the impurities, heresies, and ignorance of the dark ages? — The chances are infinite that there have been flaws somewhere or other, in the long chain of succession; and — as no one knows where the fatal breach may have been, it is sufficient to spread universal panic through the whole church. What bishop can be sure that he and his predecessors in the same line have always been duly consecrated? Or what presbyter, that he was ordained by a bishop who had a right to ordain?" — "But the difficulties do not end here. It is asked, how a man who is no true Christian, can be a true Christian minister; — how he, who is not even a disciple of Christ, can be a genuine successor of the apostles?"

"But — will Christians be content to receive this strange doctrine? Are they willing to sacrifice even charity itself to an absurdity? Powerful as are the arguments on all hands against this paradox, none is so powerful with us as this. We *feel* that if there were nothing else to say, there is no proposition more certain, than that a dogma, which consigns the Lutheran, the Scottish, and indeed the whole reformed non-episcopal clergy to contempt, *however holy*, and which authenticates the claims of every Episcopal priest, *however unholy*, must be utterly alien from the spirit of the New Testament."*

"Since the first century, not less, in all probability, than a hundred thousand persons have exercised the functions of bishops. That many of these have not been bishops by apostolic succession,

* See Edinburgh Review, 1843, on Puseyism, or, the Oxford Tractarian School.

is quite certain. Hooker admits that deviations from the general rule have been frequent, and, with a boldness worthy of his high and statesman-like intellect, pronounces them to have been often justifiable."*

The doctrine of apostolical succession is overthrown by the clear and abundant evidence which we have from the early fathers, that ordination was performed by presbyters. Any one who wishes to be acquainted with this evidence in its details, may consult Goode's Divine Rule, Vol. II, Coleman's work on the Constitution and Worship of the Apostolical and Primitive Church, Smyth's Presbytery and Prelacy, and other well known works.

That there may be lawful ordinations by presbyters without a bishop is conceded and maintained by many Episcopalians, and those of the first respectability. Hooker gives it as his decided opinion, "that there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordinations made without a bishop."

Archbishop Whately, a man of distinguished talents, learning, and integrity, and sustaining the highest office in the Episcopal church, after a thorough examination of the doctrine of apostolic succession, comes to the conclusion, that it is destitute of satisfactory proof.

He says: "If a man consider it as highly *probable* that the *particular minister* at whose hands he receives the sacred ordinances, is really apostolically descended, *this* is the very utmost point to which he can, with any semblance of reason, attain; and the more he reflects and inquires, the more cause for hesitation will he find. There is not a minister in Christendom, who is able to trace up, with any approach to certainty, his own spiritual pedigree." "If a bishop has not been duly consecrated — his ordinations are null; and so are the ministrations of those ordained by him, — and so on without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite extent. And who can pronounce that during the dark ages, no such taint was ever introduced? Irregularities could not have been wholly excluded, without a

* See Edinburgh Review for 1839, On Church and State.

perpetual miracle. Amidst the numerous corruptions of doctrine and of practice, and gross superstitions, that crept in — we find descriptions not only of the profound ignorance and profligacy of many of the clergy, but of the grossest irregularities in respect of discipline and form. We read of bishops consecrated when mere children; — of men officiating who barely knew their letters; — of prelates expelled, and others put in their place, by violence; — of illiterate and profligate laymen and habitual drunkards, admitted to holy orders; and in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder and indecency. It is inconceivable that any one, even moderately acquainted with history, can feel — any approach to certainty, that amidst all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to; — and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained, was admitted to sacred offices.

"The ultimate consequence must be, that any one who sincerely believes that his claim to the benefits of the gospel covenant depends on his own minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true ordination, and this again, on perfect apostolical succession, — must be involved, in proportion as he reads, and inquires, and reflects on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity."

Archbishop Usher, one of the brightest ornaments of the Episcopal church, affirmed, that in ancient times presbyters alone successively ordained even bishops. And he said, he honored the non-episcopal churches of Europe as true members of the church universal, and should readily receive the sacrament at the hands of Dutch ministers, if he were in Holland. Bishop Stillingfleet says: "It was acknowledged by the stoutest champions of Episcopacy, before these late unhappy divisions, that ordination performed by presbyters in case of necessity, is valid." Sir Peter King says, he finds clearer proofs of presbyters *ordaining*, in the early church, than of their administering the Lord's Supper. I might multiply testimonies of the like kind from Episcopalians almost without end. But it is sufficient for my purpose to give you a few specimens.

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy and Titus, gives a very particular description of what he regards as essential qualifications of a bishop. But he makes no mention of the circumstance of his being duly ordained. Had he attached such consequence to this circumstance, as many do at this day, it is not probable he would have passed it in silence. In this and in every other instance he showed, that his mind was intent upon *important realities*, and not upon *outward forms*. It is indeed said, in order to show the importance of outward, visible forms and rites, that man must have a *body* as well as a spirit. I agree to this. But we must take care to let the body be as God has made it, never attempting to add to it, or in any way to alter it. If true spiritual religion is to be *embodied* in outward forms and ceremonies, let those forms and ceremonies be as God in the New Testament appointed them to be. This visible body of internal, invisible Christianity, when not misshapen or made monstrous by man's contrivances, is a fit companion and help to the spirit.

I must now refer this doctrine of apostolical succession to your own free consideration; only expressing my conviction, that the doctrine understood in that high and exclusive sense in which I have here considered it, though held very tenaciously by many at the present time, will, by its extravagance and uncharitableness, occasion reproach and injury to the cause of Episcopacy, and will, for that and other reasons, be gradually, and in the end, entirely abandoned by *Protestant* Episcopalians, — retaining its seat only where it properly belongs, that is, in the Catholic church.

I cannot leave the present topic without adverting to the general question of *divine appointment* and *divine authority*, in regard to the gospel ministry. Presbyterians and Congregationalists hold as much as Episcopalians, that the *gospel ministry* is appointed of God, and derives all its authority ultimately from God, not from man. But it is here, as in other cases, that God's appointment is ordinarily carried into effect and his government administered, through the agency of man. But it would be culpable presumption in us to decide, that the manner in which God executes his appointments is and must be always the same. In his infinite

wisdom, he chooses a variety of methods, always adapting them to circumstances, and to the ends which he has in view. Under the former dispensation, he gave prophets to his people, in ways suited to the purposes intended. At the beginning of the new dispensation, he gave apostles to be witnesses of the miracles of Christ, preachers of his gospel, the first founders of Christian churches, etc., and he gave them in a manner adapted to those objects. But even here, the manner was not the same. Matthias was chosen in a way different from the other eleven, and Paul in a way different from any of the twelve. But the age of miracles has ceased, and the divine appointment is now executed in the ordinary course of providence. The essential qualifications of ministers are pointed out by an inspired Apostle, but not the particular manner in which they shall come into the sacred office. If ministers possess the qualifications required, and are inducted into the ministry in a regular and becoming manner, and do the duties of the office faithfully, they are *God's ministers*, and he *truly gives* them for the good of his church, whether he brings them into the office in one way or another. Faithful ministers in the *Episcopal* church are God's gift, and Christians should receive them as such. And many and precious have been these gifts. And are not ministers in evangelical churches of other names equally God's gift? And should not Christians, particularly those who have received spiritual profit under their ministry, thank God for them, and for all the blessings resulting from their labors? Whatever may be the particular mode of proceeding among men in introducing well qualified and faithful ministers into the sacred office, they are there *by divine appointment*. They are God's ministers; and he owns them and blesses them as such. And they have equally a divine right to perform all the duties of the ministerial office.

The principle which I maintain may be illustrated by a reference to civil government. The Bible teaches as plainly and expressly, that civil rulers are *ministers of God, and divinely appointed*, as that preachers of the gospel and pastors of churches are so. Moses, and Samuel, and Saul, and David, were set

apart to their office as rulers, by a *special* and *miraculous* divine interposition. Afterwards the office of chief ruler or king became hereditary; and those who held the office on the ground of hereditary right were lawful kings, and were divinely appointed. But observe, that when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Jews, and acquired dominion over them, Jeremiah exhorted and commanded them to "serve the king of Babylon," and rebuked the false prophets who endeavored to persuade them not to serve him. Nebuchadnezzar was then the divinely appointed ruler of the Jews; — God sent him to reign over them, and it was their duty to submit to him as "the ordinance of God;" and obedience to him became obedience to God. Even when the Jews returned from their captivity, their rulers were indebted for their authority to Cyrus and his successors. Come now to the time of Christ and the apostles. Through the arrangements of providence, the supreme government had passed into the hands of the Romans, and Cæsar was the king of the Jewish nation. But he came to be so, not by any supernatural or special divine designation, but by the very ambiguous right of conquest and superior power. It was however a wise and righteous God that shaped the concerns of both these nations, and, by his overruling Providence, subjected the Jews to the Roman power. And whatever may be said of the means by which the Romans brought the Jews into subjection, or of the way in which Cæsar came to have authority over them; yet as, under divine providence, he actually possessed that authority, and was the king of the Jews, Jesus recognized that authority and submitted to it, and inculcated the duty of obedience upon his disciples. The apostles did the same. The rulers whom they acknowledged as the ministers of God, and whom Christians were to honor and obey, were generally tyrannical and cruel men. But the apostles considered them as appointed and sent of God to fill the office of rulers. The language of Paul, Rom. xiii, is very plain. He calls rulers, — such as were then in office, — "the higher powers;" and says they are "of God," — "ordained of God," — "the ordinance of God," and "ministers of God;" and requires Christians to be subject to them.

Follow now the history of the Roman Empire. See how it was rent asunder by factions and revolutions, and divided and subdivided into a great number of smaller kingdoms, each one having its own ruler, and generally on the ground of hereditary right. Come at length to the British nation. Whoever was the king, and however he came to be so, *he* was "*the minister of God*," and was made so by the arrangements of providence; and he was divinely designated to his office, as *really*, though not in the same manner, as David was. You finally reach our own country. Casting off the British authority, we established a government and elected rulers in our own way. But our Governors, and Presidents, and Judges are all "ministers of God;" and government in our Republican form is as much a divine institution, as in the Kingly or Imperial form. Episcopalians fully recognize this principle, and, in their 37th Article, expressly affirm the duty of "a respectful obedience to the civil authority, regularly and legitimately constituted." They do not mean that a civil authority must be *monarchical*, or *hereditary*, or be constituted in any one particular way. They acknowledge the legitimate authority of our Republican rulers, *just as they are*, and have altered the English prayer for the King into an American prayer for the President; and in all respects they conduct themselves as faithful subjects of our Republican government. And if our government should again be changed, and go back to what it was; if it should come to pass, that the King of Great Britain should be our King, and we should be under a hereditary Monarch, American Episcopalians would readily submit to that government, and would restore the Liturgy to its original form, so that they might offer up prayer for the King and Queen and the Royal Family. And if after a while there should be still another revolution, and another Oliver Cromwell should come to be established as our chief ruler and Protector; I suppose Episcopalians would still be subject to "the powers that be," and would pray for the Lord Protector, just as they now do for the President. Episcopalians are good citizens, and hold to sound principles in regard to civil government;—which is as truly an ordinance of God as the gospel ministry.

In this way we may get a just idea of the *principle* of *succession*, — succession not as an abstract thing, but as a *reality*, a *matter* of *fact*. There has been a *succession* of *rulers* in the different nations of Europe, how many soever may have been the interruptions and changes in the order of that succession. So in these United States. Have we not, from the beginning had a succession of rulers? For a long time our chief ruler was the King of Great Britain. GEORGE THE THIRD was the last. He was the *predecessor* of GEORGE WASHINGTON. There was indeed a time when no one man was chief ruler of all these States, — although they were in some respects, under the authority of the Old Congress. But at length Washington became our *Chief Magistrate*, as truly as George the Third had been before. Accordingly, as chief ruler of all these States, WASHINGTON was the *successor* of GEORGE THE THIRD. Thus these American States have had from the beginning a succession of rulers, — a *real* succession, though not an *unvaried* or *unbroken* succession; a succession of rulers invested with their office in different ways, but all "ordained of God." No man in our Republic can be President, Governor or Judge, unless he is regularly brought into office *according to our Republican Constitution and Laws*. But when he is thus regularly brought into office, is he not invested with a just authority? And does not God give rulers in this way as truly as in any other? Is not a Republican government founded on divine right, as much as an hereditary monarchy? Does the King of Great Britain or any of the governments of Europe refuse to acknowledge our government, and deny the validity of its acts, because it is *Republican?* And do *we* refuse fellowship with the governments of Europe, because they are *Monarchical* or *Imperial?* No. Men have sense enough to manage these matters properly in civil concerns.

And I verily think that Christian ministers and churches of different countries, and different forms of government, should have as much good sense and enlargedness of mind, as the officers and members of civil communities. The different denominations of Christians have their order, their rules of proceeding, in regard to

the formation of churches and the ordination of ministers, — all of them regarding the church and the ministry as divine institutions. Their rules of proceeding may not be perfectly wise and proper. But they all have *order* of *some kind*. Now if churches or ministers have the essential qualifications prescribed in the word of God, and conform to the rules of order in their own denomination; that is, if Richard Cecil and John Newton and their churches conform to the rules of the Episcopal denomination, and Andrew Fuller and Robert Hall and their churches conform to the rules of the Baptist denomination, and Timothy Dwight and Edward Payson and their churches, to the rules of the Congregational denomination, and Samuel Davies and John H. Rice and their churches, to the rules of the Presbyterian denomination, and Wilber Fisk and John Summerfield and their churches, to the rules of the Methodist denomination, — assuming that these denominations do all hold the essential truths and obey the essential laws of the gospel, and have severally their rules of order; — then I say, all these ministers and churches are to be acknowledged and treated by each other as true Christian ministers and churches. And if any one stands off from others because they differ from him in outward forms; does he not contradict the Scripture principle which he acknowledges relative to civil government? Does he not forget that the kingdom of Christ consisteth in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? As to the rules of order — I would insist upon them strenuously, not *exclusively* upon the order established in my own denomination; but upon *order in some way*, and *its appropriate rules*. If a man calls himself a Presbyterian minister, or a Baptist minister, or an Episcopal minister, and yet has not conformed to the order established in his own denomination, and has not a regular and honorable standing there; I cannot receive him in the character he assumes, any more than I can receive one as a congregational minister, if he despises or neglects congregational order. Congregationalists as well as other denominations have *rules of order* — rules which are intended and in some measure adapted to secure order. Our rules may need mending. Still they are *rules*. And good order

is promoted more by a strict observance of *imperfect* rules, than by a partial observance of those which are more perfect. Let us always support the *principle of order*, not *in any one form exclusively*, — this would be illiberal and narrow, — but in the several forms in which it is found among good men. Let us stand up, firmly and zealously in behalf of our brethren of other names, as well as in our own behalf, for *the principle of order;* endeavoring, with a noble liberality, to promote the peace and prosperity of every part of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Thus let us aim to feel and act, in some humble measure, as he does, who is Head over all things to the church, and who looks down upon all the branches of it with equal kindness, and upon all that is holy in his redeemed people with equal complacency.

But the Episcopal form of church polity is sometimes regarded as a *human* arrangement, and is adopted because its tendency and the influence it actually exerts, are supposed to be better than those of any other denomination. Let us examine the matter in this light. Let us inquire whether the obvious tendency of prelacy and the influence it has exerted are such, as to render it expedient for us to adopt it.

Let us then turn our attention to what is a prominent object in the episcopal church, as it is in every other church, that is, its *ministers*. And in endeavoring to satisfy myself whether that church has a title to be preferred before churches under other forms, I inquire, not whether Episcopal ministers are good men and faithful ministers, but whether they are *better* than *others*. If, as the claim of some is, they are God's true ministers, specially and exclusively; if at their ordination, they receive the Holy Ghost in a sense in which ministers who are ordained in other forms do not receive it; it is certainly reasonable to expect, that they will excel other ministers in those qualifications which the sacred office requires, and in the fidelity and success of their labors. Otherwise, their being thus endued with the ineffable gift of the Holy Ghost, would seem to be of no value. Are then the episcopal clergy, as a body, possessed of higher qualifications than other ministers? Do they more completely sustain the character of a

bishop or elder, as drawn by an apostle? Are they more diligent and faithful in the duties of their calling, or more fervent in prayer? Are they more sound in the faith? Do they more earnestly preach Christ crucified, and more fully make known his unsearchable riches? Do they exhibit more zeal to spread the word of God, to evangelize the heathen, and convert the world? Or do they make greater efforts and sacrifices to promote good institutions at home, and to advance the cause of learning and morality? Have the episcopal clergy in our country been superior, in any of the above mentioned respects, to congregational or presbyterian ministers? Cast your eye over Massachusetts and other parts of New England from its first settlement to the present time, and compare the three orders of the Episcopal clergy with congregational ministers, and see whether the former have possessed higher ministerial excellencies, than the latter; or whether they have enjoyed more visible tokens of the divine approbation; or whether the substantial interests of religion have been better promoted by their labors? I do not undervalue the worth of their characters, or the usefulness of their labors. I only ask whether they have been superior to others. And in conclusion, I ask, whether, if we should go over to Episcopalians, we should have a prospect of being connected with better ministers.

Pass then from the ministry to the churches, and inquire, whether those of the Episcopal order are better than those of other denominations. Do the members of episcopal churches exhibit more satisfactory evidence of piety? Are higher qualifications required of persons who are admitted to the fellowship of the church and the sacrament of the Supper? Do Episcopal churches maintain a more vigilant inspection and discipline over their members? Do they show a more devout regard to the Christian Sabbath, and do they give a more constant and reverent attendance on public worship? Have professors of religion among them less of a worldly spirit? Are they less devoted to fashion and vain amusements? Have they a higher degree of domestic and personal godliness? Go from church to church, from house to house, and from closet to closet, and see whether you find more abundant fruits of the Spirit, more of pure and undefiled religion?

Now if neither ministers, nor churches, nor individual Christians of the Episcopal denomination, however excellent they may be, are found to be no more excellent than those of other denominations; — if prelacy, after time for a fair trial, appears to have contributed nothing above other forms of church government, to the spiritual benefit of ministers or churches, or private Christians; then in these respects, there seems to be no reason, why we should give up the ecclesiastical system which was held by our Puritan fathers, and which we think existed in the time of the apostles, and adopt the system of prelacy. And what shall we say of those who maintain, that the Episcopal church is the only true church of Christ, and that their ministers are the only ministers who have received the Holy Spirit to qualify them for their office, and that their ordinances are the only ordinances which can secure the blessing of God; while yet there is seen among them no degree of spiritual health or activity, above what is seen among those whom they exclude from the benefits of church-fellowship.

There is, on the ground of expediency, another reason against adopting prelacy, namely, that *it introduces into the Christian church a principle of hurtful tendency, that is, a distinction in regard to office and rank among the ministers of Christ.* Were this distinction of divine authority, we would quietly submit to it, and confide in that divine wisdom which appointed it. But as it is an ordinance of man, we ought to inquire whether it is of such a nature and tendency, as to justify us in adopting it. There is evidently no foundation for this distinction in the characters or qualifications of gospel ministers. There would be a bishop, though no one could be chosen, who was superior to common presbyters. Is there then any reason for the distinction in the nature of the work to be done? I think not. For all, if properly qualified, are able to preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, and preside in the church. And as to the work of ordaining; — why is not a body of presbyters, as competent to set apart others to the same office as a bishop is? Now as this distinction is not required by the nature of the work to be done, and so is arbitrary; it

specially tends to beget pride and self-complacency in those who are raised to the superior rank. Some of the apostles with the meek and lowly Jesus before their eyes, aspired after a higher office, than others were to occupy. But Jesus told them, that there *was to be no such office* in his kingdom; that they were all brethren. And why should we create an office, which is suited to be an object of ambition to aspiring minds? Why make a distinction, which will be likely to excite that unhallowed principle to a perilous activity?

But this is not all. So far as one portion of the clergy are in rank and power, raised above the proper level, the other part are sunk below it. It is a matter of fact, that the order of things in the Episcopal church thrusts the inferior clergy down from their proper station, deprives them of a part of their rights, and hinders them from performing a part of the duties incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ. According to the word of God, they are all *rulers* in the Church, *under Christ*, the Supreme Ruler. Their being under HIM is not a degradation, but an honor; — not a loss of rights, but a matter of truth and justice, and an unspeakable privilege. But for them to be subjected to an unnecessary human authority *is* a loss of just rights, and a hinderance to the performance of important duties; and so it is a degradation. It is the right and duty of every gospel minister, not only to administer baptism, but to admit persons to the communion of the church and to the participation of the Lord's Supper. And to take the right out of the hands of common pastors, and put it into the hands of a prelate, is as arbitrary and unjust, as it would be to put the right of baptizing exclusively into his hands. What is there in the business of *confirming*, as set forth in the "Book of Common Prayer," which is more important or more difficult than baptism? And yet while a presbyter baptizes, he cannot confirm. If either is the more important, surely it is baptism. And we should naturally think that, if either of them is to be deemed of superior importance, and, on that account, to be assigned exclusively to the bishop, it must be baptism, which is plainly a *divine* institution, rather than confirmation, which is a

human institution. And when I compare confirmation with the *Lord's Supper*, I find equal reason to regard the latter as the more solemn and important. Why then is an ordinary pastor who is allowed to administer the Lord's Supper, forbidden to administer the rite of confirmation? If the less important duty is assigned exclusively to the bishop; why not the more important? Why is it not made the duty of the bishop, and of him only, to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper? And for the same reason, why should he not do all the preaching too, as this is vastly more important and difficult, than the work of confirmation? The same may be said in regard to the right and the duty of consecrating men to the office of ministers, by prayer and the imposition of hands; — a transaction to which presbyters are as competent as bishops. My position is, that, so far as the Episcopal system deprives presbyters of any rights which naturally pertain to their office, and so far as it hinders them from the performance of any ministerial duties, to which they are competent; it degrades them in the public estimation, and, by an unnecessary and arbitrary arrangement, curtails their influence and usefulness.

It is a serious objection against the system of prelacy, that *it hinders the members of the church from performing an important part of their duty as Christians.* We have seen that it deprives them of all direct agency in the discipline of offenders. In this way, it tends to prevent them from feeling the interest which they ought to feel in the character and conduct of each other, and, of course, from exercising the watchful care over each other, which is required as a duty. To induce men to do such a duty, and to do it faithfully, it is important to make them feel the force of a direct responsibility. Any sincere Christian will be likely to watch over his brethren for their good, to reprove them when the case requires, and labor for their amendment, if it is understood, that this is a duty which properly belongs to him. But how can we expect that individual Christians will faithfully watch over and reprove one another, as required by the precepts of Scripture, and that the business of discipline will be faithfully accomplished, if it all devolves on a single man, and that man

generally at a distance, occupied with other cares, and not likely to be sufficiently acquainted with the persons concerned to be a suitable judge? There ought at least to be something which answers to *trial by jury*, which is deemed so indispensable to the security of individual rights and the exercise of justice. Let every private member of the church be tried and judged either by his brethren regularly assembled as a judicial body, or by their *representatives*, chosen and authorized to act for them. This last is truly a republican proceeding; and it recognizes the principle, that it is the right and duty of the members of the church to attend to the business of discipline, although they choose to do it, as the members of our civil communities do, by or through their *representatives*, to whom they delegate the necessary power. Where the members of the church are possessed of intelligence and judgment, qualifying them to have a direct, personal agency in managing the discipline of the church, the *Congregational* plan is, in my opinion, preferable, and more exactly in accordance with the primitive practice. Either the Congregational or Presbyterian systems appears to me altogether preferable to the Episcopal. And, if I mistake not, all experience will show, that wherever the business of discipline is taken out of the hands of the churches, and committed to the hands of a single man, who is to take care of a large number of churches, the duty cannot be faithfully performed.

LECTURE CXXV.

THE LITURGY.

My next reason against adopting the Episcopal scheme is, that *it imposes unscriptural and burdensome restrictions upon all the clergy.* The Bible makes it the duty of ministers to offer up prayer in public assemblies; but it does not prescribe the *form* of their prayers; and it nowhere gives the right to do this to any man, or any body of men. If ministers are, in any good measure, qualified for their office, they are qualified to conduct the devotions of the church. And their prayers should be such as the spirit of piety in them suggests, and such as are suited to the circumstances of the congregation. And why should they not be trusted with this part of the service of the sanctuary, as well as other parts? Why should they be required to pray in one particular form, and forbidden to vary one iota from it? Who on earth has a right to tell the ministers of Christ the very thoughts they shall think, and the very words they shall speak in their supplications and confessions and thanksgivings to God on every occasion? Were it not for the influence of custom, what gospel minister at the present day would yield this right to any one? Is not a well qualified minister, — is not a bishop as able to make a prayer as others are to make it for him, — and others who lived hundreds of years ago? Bishops are, it is said, *successors of the apostles*, and stand up in their place. And did the apostles read written forms of prayer? — It is an unwarrantable restriction. And I cannot but think, that many ministers in the

Episcopal church feel it to be so. Suppose an Episcopal priest or bishop, in accordance with the feelings of all others, wishes to make some uncommon event, not mentioned in the liturgy, a subject of public prayer. But he must not do it. His prayer is in his book, and he must read it just as it is, — how much soever he may desire to pray, and how much soever others may desire that he would pray, in a different manner. Again. Suppose a scene occurs, such as has frequently occurred, and such as we hope will occur still more frequently; — suppose that he who is ministering in the sanctuary, sees evident signs of awakened and solemn attention, deep anxiety, and tenderness of heart through the assembly before him, and he well knows that many are ready to ask, what shall I do to be saved, and his own heart is full of love for lost souls, and strong desires for their salvation, and he longs to cry to God in their behalf in a manner adapted to their state, and to his own devout emotions. What shall he do? Why, he can only read a prayer, written many hundreds of years ago — a prayer good for some other occasions, but not for this. Now, were I an Episcopal minister, I do not say, were I a bishop, but were I a minister of the lowest rank, and found myself in such circumstances, I would instantly forget that I was under authority to any one, but to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, — I would cast off my bondage, and would offer up prayer to God, according to the impulses of my own heart.

Reading public prayers from a book may be advisable and useful, when ministers have but little cultivation of mind and are very imperfectly prepared for their office. But if ministers are possessed of the requisite qualifications, what human being has a rightful authority to dictate to them how they shall pray? and how can they submit to such dictation, from whomsoever it may come? I know not how it is in this country; but in the church of England, when any new and remarkable event takes place, suitable to be mentioned in public prayer; all the clergy, and all the bishops too, are silent, till the archbishop composes and publishes a prayer for them to read. Now what apostle ever under-

took anything like this? It is a palpable innovation upon apostolical and primitive practice; — a gross infringement of the liberty and the duty of the ambassadors of Christ.

"The liturgy of the Episcopal church is chargeable with unnecessarily repeating the same petitions, and with joining together those which have no kind of connection." Another objection, is the shortness of the prayers. "The longest are ended almost before you have time to bring your mind into a proper frame for joining in it; and some of them, are finished almost as soon as they are begun. Besides the constant interruption which is thus given to devotional feelings, there is a want of dignity and of sense in a collection of what may be called *shreds* or *fragments* of prayers. The Lord's prayer is sometimes introduced where no person can perceive any reason for using it, and is brought forward so often in the course of the same service, as to have the appearance of vain repetition."

As I have undertaken to inquire a little into the reason of things, I would ask why the Episcopal church, which prescribes *prayers* for ministers, does not also prescribe their *sermons?* It may be said, that this was in some sort actually done; that two volumes of homilies were early written and published, and ordered to be read by the clergy in the church. I suppose however that even then, those ministers who were competent to write edifying discourses, had liberty to do it. This was all well. And those who were competent to make edifying prayers, should have had liberty to do this also. But why is not the use of homilies continued, as much as the use of written prayers? You may say, that ministers now are well educated, and are qualified to make their own sermons. And are they not also qualified to make their own prayers? Who can see any reason for the difference? If the Episcopal church prescribes the whole course of public devotions, it should, to be consistent, prescribe the whole course of public instructions, and bishops, as well as the inferior clergy, should use a book of homilies, as they now use the book of common prayer. If it is said, that old homilies, though very edifying and acceptable when they were composed, are not

adapted to a modern assembly, — (which is verily the case); then why do not the bishops, or an archbishop, write and publish new homilies?

The Episcopal church "suspends the order for the reading of the homilies in churches, until a revision of them may be conveniently made for the clearing of them from obsolete words and phrases, and from the local references." Now if the reading of homilies is suspended, because they need revision; I should suppose the same would be done with the book of common prayer. The reasons for this are the same in kind, though not equal in degree. A revision of the prayers is demanded for "clearing them of obsolete words and phrases," as is said in the other case. They have already cleared them of "local references." Why not do more? Why should it retain anything which, by common consent, is laid aside as unsuitable? I refer now to what is called "the Churching of Women;" which has gone into general disuse. It may be said, the service is to be referred to the discretion of the minister, and to the option of women. But so it is, that their option is against the service. And so it is likely to be; and so I think it ought to be. Why then is an obsolete ceremony still prescribed?

As to the general current of thought and sentiment contained in the book of common prayer, — I would treat it with the sincerest veneration, not because the form in which it is presented is derived from the fathers of the church of England, or from the Christian fathers in the early ages of the church; but because it is Scriptural, and suited to promote evangelical piety. I rejoice in the thought, that it has, through the blessing of God, been the means of aiding the devotions of an innumerable multitude of believers, and training them up for the worship of heaven. And I am confident that ministers and Christians of all denominations may be benefited by a familiar acquaintance with it. But I object to the *constant* and *exclusive* use of *any prescribed forms of prayer*, however excellent.

Man is so constituted, that he craves variety; and you cannot deprive him of it, and confine him, without any obvious

reason, to one invariable course, even in religious duties, without doing violence to the principles of his intellectual and moral nature. Look now at the manner of introducing public worship. At the commencement of every morning and every evening service, the minister must say: "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, etc." Now this introductory address, which is of some length, is all true and important; and, whenever a congregation need to be informed, that confession of sin is required by the word of God, it is proper and useful. But after the people have been frequently and fully instructed on this point, why take up their time with a constant and needless repetition, which is almost sure to become a dull formality? Instead of reiterating continually, and in the same words, that the Scripture moveth us to confession, why not proceed at once to make confession? When Christians meet together for the express purpose of prayer, there is surely no occasion for them to be *always* told before they engage in prayer, that the Scripture moveth them to pray. And if you say, it is proper for them to be continually *reminded* of it, you might as well say, that the people should be continually reminded of their duty to receive instruction; and that when we come to the sermon, it is proper for us always to repeat exactly the same form before we begin, and say, that "the Scripture in sundry places moveth us to" *this* service, that is, ministers to preach, and the people to hear. And I cannot but think that, although ministers quietly submit to use this invariable introductory address out of respect to Episcopal authority, they would after all, choose to be left at liberty to introduce the service as their own good taste and judgment should dictate.

See too how remarkably particular are the directions given to ministers in regard to the manner of conducting the public service, — directing them just what they shall say before they begin and after they close the reading of the lesson. "Before every lesson, the minister shall say, here beginneth such a chapter, or verse of such a chapter, of such a book: and after every lesson,

here endeth the first, or the second lesson." It is indeed proper that the minister should inform the congregation what portion of Scripture is to be read, as ministers of all denominations are accustomed to do. But why is it necessary to prescribe the particular manner, in which this information shall be given? In the Episcopal service, the whole congregation, several times repeat the Lord's prayer with the minister, and they all join in saying other prayers *after* the minister, as little children say prayers or hymns after their parents. Now everything of this kind appears to me to be a real hinderance to devotion, and a disorder and confusion inconsistent with the solemnity and stillness which ought to pervade a religious assembly. And it seems to me, if Paul were here, he would reprove it, — as he reproved the confusion in the Corinthian church which was occasioned by several persons speaking together. What I have now noticed, and also the very frequent changes of posture in the assembly, must, I think, appear strange and unbecoming to any one, who has not been reconciled to them by long use.

The order of service in the Episcopal church extends through the whole year, and is exceedingly particular. There is a special service for the first, second, third and fourth Sundays in advent, then for Christmas, and the first Sunday after Christmas; then for the circumcision of Christ; then for the epiphany, then for the first, second, third, fourth, fith, and sixth Sundays after epiphany; then for the third Sunday before lent, then for the second, and the first; then for each Sunday during the forty days of fasting in lent; then for good Friday, — easter, — and the five Sundays after easter; then the ascension day; then pentecost; then Trinity Sunday, and each of the twenty-five Sundays after Trinity; then St. Andrew's day, St. Thomas's day, etc. then all saints day. Now my curiosity leads me to inquire, what is the reason of all this? Why was such a particular and uniform arrangement made? Neither Christ nor the apostles give any instructions favorable to it. And if it is considered in the light of expediency, I inquire, whether imposing one and the same course for each and every year tends to spiritual improvement,

and whether it has resulted in intellectual and moral attainments above those which have been found under other forms of public worship.

I have one more question, namely; whether the above mentioned assignment for each Sunday is founded on any obvious reasons, and whether the services assigned to each Sunday are in general any better adapted to that Sunday, than to some other. For example; is the short prayer provided for the sixteenth or seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, any more adapted to that Sunday, than to the eighteenth or nineteenth? The prayer for the seventeenth is this: "Lord, we pray thee, that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works, through Jesus Christ." Now is there any reason for assigning this prayer to the seventeenth rather than to the eighteenth, for which the following prayer is provided: "Lord, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ." No reason appears. While then the service provided for some occasions has an evident adaptedness to those occasions; the arrangement in other cases is altogether arbitrary. Now, if it is expedient to require ministers and churches to conform to a particular arrangement of public services when there is an obvious reason for it; is it expedient, when there is no reason?

But I must now state a more serious objection against the liturgy, namely, that *it contains some passages which are highly exceptionable.* And no one will say, that its general excellence can justify its errors. The Episcopal church has the power to make alterations in the liturgy. They have actually made alterations. And there is nothing to prevent them from making more, if they judge best. Must we not then consider whatever is found in the liturgy, to be a true expression of the belief of the Protestant Episcopal church in America?

I now refer to the false doctrine contained in the baptismal service. After the child is baptized, the minister says: "Seeing now that the child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of

Christ, let us give thanks to Almighty God for these benefits." Then follows the Thanksgiving: "We give thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to *regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for *thine own child by adoption*, and to *ingraft* him into thy *holy church*." Now if it were a fact, that every baptized child is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and made God's own child by adoption, it would be a duty to acknowledge it with gratitude. But there is no evidence of the fact, either from Scripture, observation, or experience. And when those Episcopal ministers, (and there are many such,) who cordially receive the teachings of Holy Writ as to the native corruption of man and the necessity of a spiritual regeneration, go through with the baptismal service, and say, that the baptized child is regenerated by the Holy Spirit; they do not believe what the words naturally express. For when the baptized child comes to years of understanding, they do not tell him that he has already been born again of the Divine Spirit, but they urge upon him, just as all evangelical ministers do, the important doctrine, that he must experience this spiritual renovation in order to prepare him for heaven, and that it is unsafe to place any reliance upon the circumstance of his having been baptized. And yet those ministers are obliged to *say*, in so many words, that the baptized child is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and received as God's own child by adoption, and incorporated into God's *holy* church; — language which expresses the idea of a saving change both of character and state, as clearly as any language can do it. Such ministers must, I think, regret the necessity of saying this: because the language does plainly express a sentiment which is not theirs; and they must have found by experience, that the practice of using words in this manner cannot, without some painful struggles, be made to sit quietly upon an enlightened and upright mind. Those, who hold the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, according to the plain, literal meaning of the language employed in the service, believe that regenerating grace, or more exactly, *regeneration by the Holy Spirit*, or the *new birth*, is conveyed to the child, through the efficacy of baptism. The moment before baptism the

child is unregenerate ; the moment after, he is regenerate. Accordingly it is during the few moments occupied in baptism, that the child is "regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and received as God's own child by adoption, and incorporated into God's holy church." In this transaction, a great change is accomplished, the very change which Jesus declared to be necessary for every human being, — a change from a state of sin to a state of holiness. But if such a momentous and instantaneous change as this is really produced by baptism, or during the time of baptism; it is certainly reasonable to expect some evidences of it. Do any such evidences appear? Does not the baptized child exhibit the same moral qualities as children who are not baptized? When he comes to years of understanding, does he not after all show that he needs to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, as much as though he had not been regenerated by baptism? As baptized children grow up, do not most of them show, that they are *not* children of God by adoption? And when they are awakened to consideration, and convinced of sin, do they not know and feel, the inefficacy of all outward rites, and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit? And what gospel minister would tell them, that they had already been regenerated, and that their anxiety on that subject was needless?

Bishop Hobart says, "that there is a distinction made in the language of the Episcopal church as well as in Scripture, between *regeneration* and *renovation*." And he maintains "that unless the baptized person is *renewed* by the Holy Ghost, his baptismal *regeneration* will only increase his guilt." It comes to this, that the baptized person is "*regenerated* by the Holy Ghost," but not "*renewed* by the Holy Ghost;" and although he is already "*regenerated* by the Holy Ghost," it will profit him nothing, unless he is "*renewed* by the Holy Ghost." The author does not undertake to tell us what the work of the Holy Spirit in *regeneration* is, and how it differs from the work of the same Spirit in *renovation*. We had supposed that whatever might be the case as to the influence of outward rites, the work of the *Holy Spirit* is *inward*, and influences the *affections*. But he holds to an im-

portant work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, which does not touch the inward affections; although in another part of the service, the child is spoken of as receiving "forgiveness of sin by this *spiritual regeneration.*" The bishop maintains baptismal regeneration "in this sense, that the baptized person is *born again, not in the affections of his soul*, but into a *new state*, etc." He is *regenerated* or "born again," and that too *by the Holy Spirit*, but is not regenerated "in the affections of his soul." And the "*new state*" into which he is brought, when in baptism he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, is not a new *spiritual* state, — it does not pertain to his inward affections; and of course it must be a *new outward* state. The bishop says, the baptized person is born again "into *a new state, in which he receives conditionally* a title to the blessings of the gospel covenant." "Receives *conditionally.*" But the baptismal service does not hint at anything conditional. It declares directly, that the baptized child is "*regenerated by the Holy Spirit*, and received as *God's own child by adoption*, and *incorporated* into God's *holy* church." Are not these the blessings of the gospel covenant? The Episcopal minister renders thanks to God that all these blessings are actually bestowed upon the baptized child. And he does the same in regard to the baptized adult; and the service for adults, in several parts, implies, that the baptized person, before baptism, is unregenerate, and that in or by the act of baptism, he is born again not only of water, but also of the Spirit. The minister does not say, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee *conditionally* to give to this child a title to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and to be received as thine own child by adoption, and to be incorporated into thy holy church." He does not thus thank God for giving the child a *conditional title* to these gospel blessings; but he thanks God that he has already, in the rite of baptism, actually bestowed them. Accordingly, I find no small difficulty in making the bishop's *explanation* of the baptismal service, agree with the *language* of the service. The one says, "a *conditional title* to gospel blessings" is received in baptism; the other says, the *blessings themselves* are received. And the church

catechism also says, that the persons baptized, "being by nature born in sin, and children of wrath, are hereby," (i. e. by baptism) "made the children of grace."

It would gratify my feelings to know precisely what is meant in the above quotation by "the baptized person receiving *conditionally a title* to the blessings of the gospel covenant." The gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the heart is mentioned in the Scriptures as one of the special blessings of the gospel covenant. Another of these blessings is set forth in that gracious promise of God, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." These are the principal blessings of the new covenant. The baptized child receives a *conditional* title to these blessings. A conditional title, is a title depending on certain conditions. What are the conditions in this case? The conditions cannot be the application of water to the child and solemnly pronouncing over him the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; for it is in or by this baptismal service, that he receives the conditional title, — the conditions being still *to be* fulfilled. What then are the *conditions?* And by whom are they to be performed? It appears from the baptismal service, that the conditions are to be performed for a time, by the sponsors, that is, the parents or other persons, who present the child for baptism, and enter into solemn engagements for him. The minister, after referring to the promise of Christ, says to the sponsors: "This infant must also — for *his* part, *promise by you* that are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself,) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments." He then puts the particular questions to each one of the sureties and receives the answers. "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and all sinful desires of the flesh — ?" Answer. "I renounce them all; and will endeavor by God's help, not to follow them — ." "Dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the apostles' creed?" Ans. "I do." "Wilt thou be baptized into

this faith?" Ans. "That is my desire." "Wilt thou then obediently keep all God's commandments, and walk in them all the days of thy life?" Ans. "I will, by God's help." In these promises, the sureties, severally, personate the infant; they speak in his name, and enter into engagements for him. Now there are some things in this transaction which a plain Puritan finds it rather hard to understand. Are the sureties responsible for the fulfilment of the promises they make? Or, as they speak in the name of the child, does the responsibility rest on *him?* It seems from the transaction, that they become responsible, till the child comes of age. If so, then in what way are they to fulfil their promises, that is, in what way is each of them to renounce the devil and his works, and to believe and obey God's word *for the child during his infancy?* Is the faith and obedience to be exercised by the *sureties*, or by the *child?* If the sureties do themselves, in the exercise of their own faculties, truly believe and obey, is that a fulfilment of the promise they make in the name of the child? If not, then what more shall they do, seeing they cannot so identify themselves with the mind of the child, that their act in believing and obeying shall become *his own personal act?* But if, whatever may seem to be implied in the promise, the *sponsors* are not really responsible for the child's faith and obedience during his infancy, and if, as is plainly signified, the *child* is not responsible, until he grows up; then where does the responsibility lie for the fulfilment, during the child's infancy, of the promise made by the sureties? After the child is of sufficient age, he of course takes the responsibility upon himself.

If the real import of the promise which the sponsors make, is meant to be this, — that they will take care, as far as possible, that the child shall receive a religious education; that he shall be restrained from vice, and be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; then why should not the language of the promise be such as clearly to convey this meaning? Why should a transaction made up of mysteries, — an *ænigma ænigmatorum*, more puzzling than Samson's riddle, be used to set forth, or rather to cover up so plain a matter? — an enigma too, the explanation of which is another and a still darker enigma.

So far as the sponsors are concerned, the *condition* of the child's title to gospel blessings must be the fulfilment of the promises they make in behalf of the child. And these promises you will understand as well as you can. But what are the conditions which relate to the child himself? On what conditions, to be performed by *him*, does his title to the blessings of the gospel covenant rest? The gospel itself represents these conditions to be, repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The child, then, in baptism, receives a title to the blessings of the gospel covenant, on condition that, in due time, he shall repent and believe. But are not these very blessings offered to all, whether baptized or not, on these same conditions? And does not every faithful minister, whether Episcopal or not, declare to all men, that all spiritual blessings will be theirs, if they will repent and believe in Christ? If then this conditional title is common to all who live under the gospel dispensation; how is it *received in baptism?*

Episcopalians have, in some instances, provided a *second* form of the service, to be used by any who shall prefer it. This is the case in the ordination service. The bishop is to repeat the first form, or another which follows it. The same choice between two modes of proceeding is provided as to the sign of the cross in baptism, and as to the mode of applying the water, and as to repeating a part of the apostles' creed. Now such a provision appears to me much more important in this case, than in either of the other cases referred to. And I have often been inclined to ask, why Episcopalians have not exercised their authority and their charity, and provided a second form of the baptismal service, in which the doctrine of *regeneration by the Holy Spirit in baptism*, should be omitted, so that ministers of different views might be freed from a heavy burden, and be at liberty to act according to their honest convictions.

Again. The liturgy *presents a low and unscriptural standard of the Christian character.* Those doubtless are regarded as true believers and heirs of eternal life, who are confirmed by the bishop, and received to the communion of the Supper, and who are

spoken of as Christians in the funeral service. As to the last, although the liturgy has been improved by the Protestant Episcopal church in America, it still plainly implies, that the person deceased, whether pious or not, was a Christian, and died in the Lord. And there is no way to avoid this conclusion, but by an unnatural explanation, or rather an evasion, of the import of the language. The service is exceedingly solemn and impressive, and is remarkably appropriate to the funeral of a devout Christian. But if used at the burial of a person who was evidently destitute of the Christian character, as it so frequently is; it conveys the false and dangerous sentiment, that a life of ungodliness is not incompatible with a title to heaven; and in this way it directly tends to confirm the irreligious in their irreligious life. And I cannot but notice the manifest inconsistency, not to say absurdity, of attempting to frame a single service, which shall be suited to the burial of the most eminent servants of Christ, and at the same time suited to the burial of the worldly and profane. The service is indeed "not to be used for any unbaptized adults, or any who die excommunicate, or who have laid violent hands upon themselves." These are the only exceptions. It may be used for baptized inebriates, or infidels. There are many persons, who, for some cause, have not been baptized, who yet have exhibited, in life and in death, the character of exemplary Christians. To these, Christian burial is, according to the rubric, to be denied.

An unscriptural standard of Christian character is also held forth in the "Order of confirmation." In the first place, the minister says to the sureties for the baptized child: "Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him, as soon as he can say *the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments, and is sufficiently instructed in the other parts of the church catechism set for that purpose.*" The same qualifications are mentioned at the beginning of the "Order of Confirmation." These are the qualifications required in order to confirmation, and in order to communion with the church in the Lord's Supper. There is in this a manifest deficiency, which

comes continually, with all its deceptive influence, before the minds of those who attend the service of confirmation in the Episcopal church.

It is, with me, a grave objection to the Episcopal church, that *it retains so many of the additions which were made to the simple institutions of the gospel by the superstition of the church of Rome.* The corruption of Christianity by human inventions began even in the time of the apostles. And these inventions, *whether recommended by their novelty, or rendered venerable by their antiquity*, the apostles repeatedly condemned. And they foretold, that still greater corruptions would be brought into the church after their decease. The Christian fathers, during the three or four centuries after Christ, laid the foundation of the church of Rome. That church, during the period of its greatest power and corruption, constantly appealed to the fathers; and the appeal was not in vain. If the fathers, during the first four or five centuries, are allowed to possess decisive authority in regard to opinions, rites, and ceremonies; the peculiarities of the Romish church can, for the most part, be vindicated and sustained. Many of the best writers in the church of England, and in the Protestant Episcopal church in America, disclaim the authority of the fathers, and hold to the Scriptures as the sufficient and only rule of faith and practice. And yet Episcopalians at this day retain a great proportion of the rites and ceremonies of popery; — not so much, I suppose, because they belonged to popery, as because they have so long been practised in their own church. Some indeed consider it as a conclusive argument in their defence, that they were in use during the first ages of Christianity. A late respectable writer in favor of prelacy says, "that the distinguishing characteristic of the Protestant Episcopal church is, the deference it pays to the primitive church; that it is the principle constantly maintained by that church, that *whatever is first is true, and whatever is later is false.*" On this ground, many Episcopalians contend for those ceremonial observances, which have been added to the simplicity of the gospel.

Now I do not admit that *ancient* fathers had any more authority

to make additions to the divine institutions, than *modern* fathers. Why should we pay deference to uninspired men in the third and fourth centuries, more than those in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; — or, to the fathers of the Episcopal church in England, more than to the fathers of the Presbyterian church in Scotland, or to the fathers of the puritan church in New England? The opinions of uninspired men cannot bind us. We are Protestants. And it seems to me, that Episcopalians, professing as they do to be Protestants, act inconsistently with their profession in paying so much regard to antiquity, and especially in retaining so many of the peculiar forms and observances of the Romish church. And I think too, that the Episcopal church is inconsistent with itself, in that it adopts some of the ancient observances, while it rejects others. The holy days kept in honor of the Trinity, of angels, of the birth and circumcision of Christ, of the virgin Mary, of the apostles, of several martyrs and Christian fathers, etc., were all at first innovations; but they became settled usages in the ancient church. The founders of the Protestant Episcopal church, by taking some of these, and omitting others, showed that they had no implicit confidence in antiquity, and that they claimed the right of judging and acting for themselves. When they pleased, they adopted an observance which originated in the bosom of popery in the fourteenth century, and rejected one which was generally observed in the third century. Now are not those, who profess such deference to ecclesiastical antiquity, while after all they are not governed by it, chargeable with some inconsistency? Does their deference really amount to any more than this, that they will follow the ancients or not, as they judge best? If they profess more than this, their practice falls short of their profession. If then modern Episcopalians charge us with the want of a due veneration for antiquity, because we reject most of the ancient ceremonies which *they* adopt; the same charge, substantially lies against them, because they reject so many of the ancient ceremonies. The ancient fathers in administering baptism, in the fourth century, *immersed the person three times, naked, and then made the sign of the cross*

on his forehead, and anointed him with holy oil. But Episcopalians reject the *trine* immersion, and *the ceremony of nakedness*, and *the anointing*, and do not commonly use *immersion*. I do not blame them for this. But where is their deference to the ancient church, when they reject the greater part of the ceremonies which were anciently used in baptism?

The Episcopal church have, if I am rightly informed, about twenty-eight festivals, and about one hundred fasts; — that is, one hundred and twenty-eight holy-days, in addition to the Lord's day; — taken either directly from the Romish church, — for instance, the festival in honor of the Trinity, which Hobart says is comparatively of modern date, originating as it did in the fourteenth century, — or from what they call the primitive church; and all on the ground of their antiquity. But the Romish church, and what is called the primitive church, had many more festivals and fasts. If then the founders of the Episcopal church were governed by a respect for antiquity, why did they not take the whole list of the holy-days, as well as a part? And if they are at liberty to reject more or fewer of the holy-days of antiquity, as they judge best; we are at liberty to do the same. If ancient usage has authority over us, it has authority throughout. But if we renounce the authority of ancient and primitive usage, we are thrown back, as we should be, upon the authority of what is *more ancient and primitive*, that is, *the word of God.*

These multiplied outward observances, every one must see, are a *departure from the Christian Scriptures.* Neither Christ nor the apostles appointed any particular days to be kept as sacred by the church, except the Lord's day. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul expressly discountenanced such observances. In the way of rebuke, he said to the Galatians: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." And in view of these superstitions, he said to them, — "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." And he spoke of them as in bondage to these "beggarly elements." If the same Apostle were here, what would he say to that church, which has made about one third of the days in the year religious festivals and fasts?

These multiplied rites and observances though they fall far short of those in the Romish church, are, in my view, carried to a great excess, and, if fully practised, would prove an intolerable yoke. Think of more than one hundred and twenty festivals and fasts, — one third part of the whole year! Think of forty days in Lent. Who has a right to load Christians with such impositions? I was born free, and I will not sell my birth-right. Most cheerfully will I submit to the authority of God. And I will show my respect and veneration for the apostles, not by keeping days in their honor, which I know they never wished, — but by believing and obeying their instructions. But what is uninspired man, that we should bow the knee to him, and should eat or not eat, work or pray, at his bidding?

This whole business of observing days and months and times, which began in the Apostle's day, and for which he rebuked the backsliding Galatians, *has an obvious tendency to corrupt Christianity, and to substitute external forms and ceremonies in the place of real godliness.* When I look at the machinery of the Episcopal church in her Sunday services; her multiplied short prayers, consisting often of a single sentence; the frequent repetition of the Lord's prayer; the continual change of posture among the worshippers, now standing, now sitting, now kneeling; the confused noise of the whole congregation often speaking the same things together; the minister's singular dress, and change of place and attire; — when I look at her many scores of fasts and festivals in honor not only of God, and Christ, but of the mother of Christ, and each one of the apostles, — in honor of the slaughtered infants of Bethlehem, — in honor of all saints, — and in honor of Michael and all angels; — at her crosses, and her pictures, and the magnificence of her cathedrals; — at her protracted meetings in Lent, and at other times; when, accustomed as I am to the simplicity of Puritan worship, I look at all this solemn machinery; I am sometimes affected with a mixture of respect and doubt and fear; — and sometimes with feelings, which I wish to avoid.

It may be said, that the ceremonials of the church are mat-

ters of taste, not of argument. So be it. I too have a taste; and, if it does not contradict anything in the Bible, I have a right to conform to its suggestions. Let me say then, that I have a preference, too strong to be expressed, for what is *plain* and *simple*. The worship of the Puritans, and their freedom from rites and forms of human origin, instead of being contrary to any principle of Christianity, are certainly conformed, in a good measure, to the pattern set before us by Christ and the apostles. In this respect the Puritans acted on a different principle from the church of England, — which did not even pretend to follow the simplicity of the mode of worship adopted by Christ and his apostles, but conformed, and that professedly, to the ceremonies and observances which originated in the ancient church, long after the days of inspiration.

LECTURE CXXVI.

POPULAR FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT. CONGREGATIONALISM AND PRESBYTERIANISM.

HAVING given particular attention to the government of the church by bishops or prelates, we shall now consider the popular form.

Congregationalists and Presbyterians were treated with equal regard by the Founders of this theological Seminary, as appears from their statutes. In various respects these two denominations of Christians agree.

1. They agree in acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ as the Supreme Head of the church, and the Scriptures as the sufficient and only infallible rule of our faith and practice.

2. They agree as to the doctrines of revelation, on the principles of evangelical religion.

3. They agree substantially as to the mode of conducting public worship and administering the sacraments.

4. They agree in rejecting prelacy, and in maintaining the parity of Christian ministers.

5. They agree in maintaining the validity of Presbyterian ordination. They both do the work of ordaining by an assembly made up of presbyters, or ordained ministers, and lay delegates from the churches; although the delegates who represent the churches, are chosen, and the ecclesiastical body that ordains, is constituted, in different ways. Presbyterian churches elect those who represent them, beforehand, and constitute their

presbyteries as standing bodies; while among Congregational churches the delegates are elected and the presbytery or ordaining council is constituted from time to time, as occasion requires. But in both, the ecclesiastical body that ordains, called presbytery or council, is composed of a competent number of ordained ministers and lay delegates.

6. In a Congregational church, the discipline of its members in case of offence, is conducted, and other ecclesiastical business is transacted, by the members of the church regularly assembled with the pastor, as an ecclesiastical body. In a Presbyterian church, this is all done by the pastor and the ruling elders, called the session.

7. In both denominations, there is provision for an appeal from the first and more private act of discipline; in one, from the act of the church as a popular assembly; in the other, from the act of the session; the appeal in the former case being to a mutual council, chosen at the time by the parties; in the latter case, to the presbytery, previously agreed upon by the churches. In the Presbyterian church, there is a further appeal from the presbytery to the synod, and from the synod to the general assembly. But in the Congregational church, there is no appeal to any ecclesiastical body superior to the mutual council.

8. In the Presbyterian church all questions in regard to the treatment of offences and other concerns, are finally determined by the judicial bodies provided by the constitution of the church. But Congregational churches claim to themselves, as popular assemblies, the right of ultimate decision; although the contending parties frequently deem it expedient to refer the ultimate decision to a council mutually chosen.

9. In both denominations, the individual members of a church act in choosing their pastor; and in both, the ecclesiastical body to whom the right of ordination belongs, decide as to the qualifications of the pastor elect, and as to the expediency of setting him apart to the pastoral office.

10. The Presbyterian churches act generally on the principle of *representation*. Congregational churches adopt the principle

in the business of councils. And many of them appoint a committee to act with the pastor in attending to other ecclesiastical concerns.

I have here spoken of Congregational principles as they exist in Massachusetts. But in some parts of New England, the Saybrook Platform is adopted, and consociations are formed, having a nearer resemblance to presbyteries, than mutual councils.

The above is a general, though not a complete view of the points of agreement and disagreement between Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

The examination of the subject of church government in the preceding Lectures on prelacy, has brought to view the principal arguments from Scripture which support Congregationalism. And this examination, I think, shows, that the popular form of government adopted by Congregationalists, agrees more exactly with the teachings of the New Testament, than that which is adopted by any other branch of the Christian church.

After the free discussion in the foregoing Lectures on church government, and the remarks above made, I shall lay before you in a concise, connected view, only the general principles of Congregationalism as they are made known by the Cambridge Platform, together with other well known writings of the Puritans and the settled practice of regular Congregational churches.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Supreme Lawgiver of the church. And no one has any rightful power or authority in the church, except what the Lord Jesus has given him in his word. Neither the church at large, nor any branch of it, can properly be held under obligation to submit or yield obedience to any ruler, civil or ecclesiastical, except in conformity with the instructions of the New Testament.

2. The Christian Scriptures are our only infallible guide in regard to the constitution and government of the Christian church, as well as in regard to all other subjects. So far as any writings of human origin coincide with Scripture, or help us to understand its instructions, they are to be gratefully received. But whoever and whatever differs from the Bible, is to be rejected. In this

respect, we differ from all those, who regard the writings of the early Christian fathers, the decisions of councils or the judgment of any uninspired men, as constituting, in whole or in part, the rule of our faith, or as possessing any ultimate authority over our conscience, either as to the doctrines of religion, the worship of God, or the government of his church.

3. *Cambridge Platform*, together with other writings and public acts of the Puritans, is to be recognized as exhibiting the essential principles of Congregationalists in regard to ecclesiastical polity.

4. There is, according to the Scriptures, only one order in the gospel ministry. Ministers may indeed differ from each other as to knowledge, piety, and usefulness. But they are all equal in office. No one is invested with authority over others; and no one is subject to the control of others.

5. While the leading principles of church government are clearly made known in the word of God, the business of applying these principles to different cases, and framing by-laws for the regulation of public worship and church discipline, belongs to the churches, and is to be executed according to their sober judgment and discretion, provided that they do not violate or neglect anything settled by the word of God.

6. A congregation or society of Christians, bound together by solemn covenant, maintaining the great truths of Christianity, and attending together to the public worship of God and the administration of gospel ordinances by regularly authorized officers, is a true and complete church of Christ, and has power within itself to conduct its own concerns; and is under no subjection or responsibility to any other church, except that which is mutual, and which is enjoined by the word of God.

7. It belongs to the individual members of every church to choose their own pastor, to discipline offenders, and to transact all other business appertaining to them as a particular church. When regularly assembled, they are to deliberate and act, and by a majority of votes to decide every question which properly comes before them.

8. Congregational churches, though they are "*distinct*, and

therefore may not be confounded one with another, and *equal*, and therefore have no dominion one over another," * yet are not *separate* bodies, but sustain a mutual relation, as servants of the same Lord, and branches of the same spiritual kingdom, and are bound to maintain Christian fellowship with each other, to watch over each other in love and faithfulness, and to do all in their power to protect each other's rights, to encourage each other in the discharge of duty, and in all proper ways to promote each other's peace and prosperity.

9. In order that the fellowship existing among the churches may effectually accomplish its objects, it is important that the churches should agree upon a definite plan of intercourse, and should determine in what manner they are to watch over each other, in what respects they are responsible to each other, and in what ways they are to protect each other's rights, and promote each other's welfare; — and also what shall be the conditions of their fellowship, and when and how it shall be ended.

10. As the community of churches is interested in the character and influence of gospel ministers; every Congregational minister whether he is a pastor or not, is to be considered as having a real and responsible connection with Congregational churches and pastors. Accordingly, either the members or the pastors of Congregational churches, after properly dealing with him in private, may, in a regular manner, prefer charges against him before an ecclesiastical council, convened according to rule, for his trial.

11. Any member of a church, who feels himself aggrieved by any act of the church, shall have the right to appeal to a mutual council.

12. Synods, or larger councils, duly assembled, and rightly proceeding according to the Scriptures, are an ordinance of God. And it belongeth unto synods and councils to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; to clear from the Scriptures directions for the worship of God and the government of the church; to bear testimony against mal-administration and cor-

* See Platform ch. 15, and Upham's Ratio Disciplinæ, pp. 37, 43, 174—6, and 206.

ruption in any particular church, and to take proper measures for the reformation thereof.*

The only platform of church government which has ever been adopted by the ministers and churches of this Commonwealth, is the Cambridge Platform. This must be regarded as the basis and standard of Congregationalism. For although this Platform has been much neglected; and although certain provisions of it, particularly the office of ruling elders and the distinction between pastors and teachers, have been given up by universal consent; and although certain usages, not authorized by the Platform, have worked themselves into our ecclesiastical affairs; still Congregationalists adhere to the *essential principles of the Platform*. And no scheme of church polity, which is essentially at variance with those principles, can meet the approbation of enlightened and judicious Congregationalists.

But in order that Congregational ministers and churches may more clearly manifest the excellence of their ecclesiastical system, and more fully realize its benefits, the following things are evidently important and necessary.

1. It is important and necessary *that the fundamental principles of Congregationalism, and the rules of church government resulting from them, should be well defined and firmly established.* The Platform is an ancient document; and though it was the product of men of powerful intellects, after much thought and experience, and though the Puritan fathers deemed it well suited to the wants of the churches in their day; it evidently needs a careful revising, in order to fit it more fully for general use at the present day. It is agreed on all hands, that it contains some principles which cannot now be adopted. It is clear too that it has some obscurities which ought to be removed, and deficiencies which ought to be supplied. A *manual of discipline*, derived from the Platform, and adapted to the present time, would be of great use to ministers and churches. For how can they avoid mistakes and irregularities in matters of discipline, unless they have before them a system of principles and rules, which has been

* See Platform, ch. 15, Sec. 1 and 4.

derived from Scripture and experience, and which they can regard as a safe directory in ecclesiastical proceedings? And how can they enjoy the benefits of Christian fellowship, unless they have a clear understanding of the duties they owe to each other, and of the manner in which those duties are to be performed.

Our Puritan fathers felt the necessity of definite principles and rules. This necessity is more urgent now, in proportion to the increased number and extent of our churches and the prevalence of other systems. We do indeed hold that Christ is our Lawgiver, and that no man and no number of men can properly undertake to legislate for the churches. But it is important for us to have a clear understanding of the laws which Christ has given us. And if, in anything, he has left it to us to proceed according to our own judgment; it is important that we should take pains to use our judgment right.

2. It is important that ministers and churches *should come to a substantial agreement, and should in all material points, adopt the same system of ecclesiastical principles and rules.* Without this, how can they maintain fellowship with one another? If some churches proceed in one way, and some in another, they will not only lose the benefit of coöperation, but will be likely to clash with each other; and instead of affording mutual aid and support, they will often occasion embarrassment and trouble to each other.

"Such looseness, neglect and disagreement," as now exist among us, "are neither seemly nor profitable; nor would they in other communities be tolerated. Every human society, that is permanent in its nature and great design, should, as far as practicable, be governed by definite, settled, and well known rules. And where communities, like our churches, are associated, and members of them are frequently transferred from one to another, inconvenience, dissatisfaction and offence are likely to result from the application of principles and rules, about which there is ignorance, or in respect to which there are different views and habits of feeling. Where wholesome laws are definite and known, they are more apt to be approved, and are more readily obeyed; and when broken, the offender is more easily made sensible of his fault, and is therefore more likely to forsake it."

Various writers have published books of great value, setting forth what they understood to be the principles of Congregationalism. In most cases, these writers agree, in some they differ. But Congregationalists have not adopted the views of either. Is it not important that we should seriously endeavor in some proper way, to come to an agreement as to the principles and rules of church government? There is no more reason to think that Congregational churches can have order and prosperity without a system of definite rules in which they agree, than that the different parts of the Commonwealth can have order and prosperity without a code of well defined civil laws, published for common use. Is it not then the manifest duty of Congregational ministers and churches to determine, deliberately and unitedly, what the principles of Congregationalism are, and then in all their ecclesiastical proceedings to carry them into practice?

The want of uniform and definite rules is manifest in regard to *the treatment of church members who are chargeable with offences.* Suppose an offender is excommunicated. In present circumstances he has it in his power to give great trouble to the church, and frequently to evade the force of its most solemn acts. The church claims, and that justly, the right to discipline its own members. At the same time, any one who is under censure has, by common consent, the right of appeal to an ecclesiastical council. Now this right of appeal, and the inherent right of the church, might be so defined and adjusted, as not to clash with one another. But at present, we have no effectual provision to sustain a church in the exercise of its right, and to bring the discipline of an offender to a final and peaceful issue. The church may, at the request of one under censure, consent to a mutual council, and that mutual council may approve the doings of the church. But in present circumstances, what is there to prevent an excommunicant from demanding a *second* mutual council, and a *third?* And in case of a refusal on the part of the church, what can hinder him from calling an ex parte council? And it is well known that even after a church has consented to one, or more than one mutual council, an ex parte council may come in,

and, instead of sustaining the church in the exercise of its rights, may nullify its most righteous acts; and by receiving an offender who is under censure, to their fellowship, may give countenance to the commission of offences in other members, and trample under foot the honor and authority of the church. How important and how easy it is for the churches to agree upon a rule, which shall shut the door against these disorders, and shall effectually sustain every church in the exercise of its rights, and at the same time provide a remedy for the injustice of any of its acts towards its members. Congregational churches pretend not to be infallible; and they are willing to grant to any member who complains of injustice, the right of appeal to an ecclesiastical council. All that seems necessary is, that they should determine, by a united act, how the appeal shall be made, and how the case of discipline shall be terminated. Let it be settled by common agreement, whether an excommunicated member, if he requests it, shall be entitled to appeal to a mutual council; and then what shall be the influence of that council's result. If the council sustains the act of the church, shall the excommunicant be entitled to a second and third appeal, or shall the act of the church, thus supported by a mutual council, be regarded as final? On the contrary, if the council *disapproves* the act of the church, and judges that the member who makes complaint, has been injured, and ought to be restored; shall *such* a decision of the council be final? Or shall it still lie with the church to determine by its own act, how the case shall be treated? And shall this act of the *church* be final, leaving no room for the excommunicated person to make any further appeal? The great thing wanted is, that the churches should come to a definite agreement on this point, so that they may support each other in the exercise of their inherent right to discipline their own members, and may scrupulously avoid whatever would in any way interfere with that right. If this matter is left unsettled, what prospect is there of efficient discipline and mutual harmony and love among the churches? And how can the fundamental principle of Congregationalism be maintained, if the power of discipline is wrested from the church, and wielded

by others who choose to act in concert with an offender? And who can think it right that any church, in its endeavors to discharge its most difficult and painful duties, should be hindered or discouraged by those sister churches, who ought always to afford the most friendly countenance and aid?

Again. The want of uniform and definite rules is at present manifest, in regard to *the discipline of ministers chargeable with immorality or heresy.*

A Christian minister, whose character and conduct are so inseparably connected with the interests of Christ's kingdom, should certainly be subject to the inspection of his brethren, and, in some proper way, should be admonished by them, and deposed from the ministry when the case requires it; and, when unjustly accused, should be able to avail himself of their protection and support. It would be a great evil for private members of the church to be free from responsibility to their brethren. But if ministers of the gospel should be thus free from responsibility, the evil would be still greater. According to the general practice at the present time, a church may complain of their pastor for any offence, and bring him for trial before a mutual council. But they may neglect their duty in this respect. And in that case, how shall the offender be called to account? Suppose him guilty of gross immorality or heresy. And suppose that notwithstanding this, he is still sustained by his church. His brethren in the ministry, and in the neighboring churches, may be grieved at his conduct. But what ecclesiastical rule is there, which would authorize them to bring him before a council for trial, or in any way to deal with him for his offence? Take another case, — that of a regularly ordained minister, not connected as a pastor with any church, though still active in the ministry; and suppose him guilty of flagrant immorality. Is it not a manifest defect in the present condition of Congregationalists, that there is no way agreed upon among them, in which such a minister can be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline? It is indeed true, that individuals may withdraw fellowship from him. But ought they to do this, without giving him a fair trial? And is it not important that they should

agree upon some definite method in which such a trial may be instituted?

There is also a manifest defect in our present ecclesiastical state in *regard to the fellowship of the churches, and the manner in which they are to treat one another when offences occur.*

Congregational churches have always professed to hold fellowship with each other. And the Platform (ch. 15.) points out several ways in which that fellowship is to be maintained. In various respects it has been maintained; and the benefits of it have been experienced. But do we carry out fully into practice the provisions of the Platform and the principles of the New Testament in regard to the fellowship and the mutual responsibility of the churches? The Platform provides, that if any public offence is found in a church, other churches are to deal with it in the way of admonition, and finally, if the case so requires, in the way of withdrawing fellowship. Is it not important that the churches should determine whether they will hold to this provision? — and if they do, that they should agree upon the method in which they will maintain this inspection over one another?

It is also desirable and important that the Congregational churches should be agreed in *the adoption of a Confession of Faith.* This was a main point with those who framed the Platform. In 1648, they unanimously adopted the following vote, namely: "The Synod, having perused and considered with much gladness of heart and thankfulness to God, the Confession of Faith published of late by the Reverend Assembly in England, do judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of faith, and do therefore freely and fully consent thereto, for the substance thereof." And they afterwards expressed their approval of the same confession of faith at different times and in various ways. If the ministers and churches of Massachusetts are united in receiving the great principles of religion which are contained in the word of God, why should they not, for the honor of their religion, publicly express their union?

As to the essential principles of Congregationalism, we have no occasion to shrink from scrutiny. Though in many respects we

agree with the other branches of Protestant Christendom; in some respects we differ from them. But we have no fear that the most thorough sifting and weighing of the essential principles of the Congregational system would be otherwise than advantageous to it. What seems to be necessary is, that the genuine principles of our denomination, together with the rules of discipline, should be definitely stated, and arranged in proper order, and that ministers and churches should unitedly adopt and maintain them. This, with the divine blessing, is what is wanted to give increasing prosperity to Congregational churches, and to recommend their principles to the approbation of others.

LECTURE CXXVII.

PERSONAL RELIGION A NECESSARY QUALIFICATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

In these closing Lectures, I shall endeavor to show the importance of real piety to those who are preparing for the sacred office. This is a subject which, I trust, the members of this Seminary have often and very seriously considered. But does it hold as high a place in your esteem as it ought? My wish is, that the subject may be so impressed on your minds and may so influence your habits of thinking and feeling, that neither the charms of literature, nor the diligence and zeal which you exercise in the pursuit of knowledge, may ever turn you aside from the cultivation of vital godliness as the most essential qualification for the ministry.

First of all then, *search the Scriptures*, and see how the present subject is treated by those who were infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit. According to their instructions, he that undertakes the work of the ministry, "must be blameless as the steward of God; not self-willed; not soon angry; not given to wine, or to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality; a lover of good men; sober, just, holy, temperate." He must "follow righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." His piety must be so uniform and unexceptionable, that he may be an example to believers in all the branches of goodness.

Next, consider *the nature of the church*, for whose welfare ministers are to labor. The church is the object of God's ever-

lasting love, and is to bear the image of his holiness. Here his perfections are to have their highest manifestation, and his grace is to abound in the salvation of sinners. Into this sacred society, this spiritual kingdom, the apostate children of men are to be introduced by the agency of the ministers of Christ. But how can their agency turn to any good account in this spiritual, holy work, unless they are the subjects of holiness themselves? Can you expect that an enemy of God will successfully persuade others to become his friends? Is it wise to commission a rebel to vindicate the law and the government which he hates?

Consider the high and sacred object for which the ministry was instituted. The Apostle says: "We are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The salvation of men is the appropriate end which the ministers of the gospel should constantly seek. But with what prospect of success can those men seek the salvation of others, who have never in good earnest sought their own? Can it be expected that they, who have never known the preciousness of Christ in their own experience, will heartily recommend him to them that are lost?

Further to illustrate the subject before you, I shall point out distinctly some of the principal *duties* of ministers.

One of their chief duties is, to preach the gospel. But if destitute of religion, they will be likely to fail both in the *matter* and the *manner* of preaching. Whatever speculative knowledge they may acquire, the things of the Spirit will be foolishness to them, and they cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. In respect to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, especially those which relate to inward, spiritual religion, their preaching will, in all probability, be deficient. They will not declare all the counsel of God. They will be led by their own feelings, or by a regard to the feelings of others, to pass over in silence those parts of evangelical truth, in which ministerial fidelity is chiefly concerned. Or if they undertake to preach the more spiritual, humbling doctrines of the gospel, they will be likely so to shape and qualify them as to obstruct their efficacy. Nothing

can impel a minister faithfully to hold forth the whole extent of evangelical truth, but that decided principle of piety, that cordial love to Christ, which is never intimidated by danger, and never drawn aside by the attractions of worldly honor or pleasure.

But even if any of those who are destitute of piety, should not fail essentially as to the *matter* of their preaching, they will doubtless fail as to the *manner*. They will offend discerning hearers by the display of vanity, or a haughty independence; or by manifesting a temper which delights in giving pain, or by making it evident that they go through their duties as an unwelcome task. In one way or another, their unsanctified spirit will insinuate itself into their preaching or prayers, so as to hinder the edification of Christians and the conversion of sinners. They cannot be expected to have that affectionate manner, which flows from goodness of heart. The Apostle addressed men with parental kindness. He says to the Thessalonians: "We were gentle among you, even as a tender mother cherisheth her children." And he was willing to labor and suffer for them, because they were dear to him. Ministers who possess this spirit, will declare the most mortifying truths, and administer the most solemn warning and reproof with faithfulness and love. But how can this be done by those in whom the inward affection is wanting? Who can successfully counterfeit the language, the looks and the voice of love?

Another important duty of a minister is *to visit the sick and the dying*, and by conversation and prayer adapted to their state, to labor for their spiritual good. In the chamber of sickness he meets, perhaps for the last time, those who have been committed to his care and for whom he must give account. What seriousness, wisdom, and tenderness does he need! What care should he take on the one hand, against causing agitation and needless distress, and on the other hand against contributing to false comfort and security in sin! In such circumstances, what a clear apprehension of divine truth does a servant of Christ need! What tenderness of feeling! What plainness and gentleness of speech! What near views of eternity! How can a man be fit for duties like these, who has never experienced the power of godliness in his own heart!

To a truly pious minister the death-bed of believers is indescribably solemn and delightful. Before him are those who have been washed from their sins, and have known the conflicts and joys of a Christian life, — now about to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. It is his duty to aid them in the last work of preparation for heaven. By setting before them the unsearchable riches of Christ, he must strengthen their faith, and cheer their drooping spirits. He must enlighten and comfort those who are soon going to the regions of light and joy. He must unite in prayer and praise with those who are shortly to join the general assembly of the saints above. He must help them to achieve their final victory over their spiritual enemies. He must speak of the truths of the gospel and the glories of heaven, and must speak of them as what he himself has known and felt. While he pronounces over them, — "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; — to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne;" he must feelingly anticipate with them the blessedness of such a death, and the rewards of such a victory. How unprepared for these solemn duties is a minister destitute of holiness! The death-bed of believers must be to him an unwelcome, gloomy place. And if he intrudes himself upon this threshold of heaven, it ought to be for the purpose of learning the first lessons of divine wisdom.

The whole business of dealing with men in public and private respecting their spiritual interests, requires in a minister a practical acquaintance with divine things, and the steady influence of evangelical affection. Without this, he will be in danger of giving countenance to the delusive hopes of the impenitent, or of discouraging those who are poor in spirit. He will not give to sinners the instructions which love and fidelity require. He will not duly declare, the holy requirements of God's law, the perfect obligation of all men to obey, and the necessity of being renewed by the Holy Spirit. It is through this want of watchfulness, this neglect of ministers to set forth plainly the truths of the law and the gospel, that the name of Christ is so often dishonored by the admission of unregenerate persons into his church.

It is evident that not only *real* but *eminent* piety is necessary to enable a minister to perform his various duties with suitable resolution, self-denial, and zeal. The Apostle Paul, whose example should be followed by all who bear the sacred office, was wholly in his work. He shrunk back from no labor or suffering. He was willing to spend and be spent for the salvation of men, fearless of opposition and danger. He approved himself a faithful servant of Christ in much affliction and distress, in watchings and fastings, in stripes and imprisonment. But his resolution and zeal were joined with discretion and mildness. He made himself servant to all that he might gain the more. To the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews: to the weak, he became as weak, that he might gain the weak. He was, in the right sense, made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. This combination of seemingly opposite virtues extended its happy influence over all his conduct as a servant of Christ.

But how is it with a minister without the grace of God in his heart. He may have a kind of zeal — a zeal which will act itself out in ostentation or rashness — a zeal which will compass sea and land to make proselytes, or will breathe out threatenings and slaughter against opposers. Or if you see in him the appearance of meekness, it will be a meekness which will lead to conformity with the world, and a forsaking of Christ in time of danger. It will be a meekness or gentleness, which will render him accessible to temptation, and dispose him to move with the current of popular feeling. If he shows a pliable, yielding disposition, it will not be for the cause of Christ, but for his own selfish ends. The zeal of a minister of distinguished moral excellence, will from its very nature be joined with discretion; his resolution with gentleness; his firmness with condescension and kindness. In him all these properties are of the same nature, and by being harmoniously blended together, form a completeness of ministerial character.

Uniform and eminent piety is necessary to prepare a minister to encounter *the trials and difficulties of his office.* Sooner or later,

he must meet not only with those adverse events which are common to men, but with those which are peculiar to the ministry. If possessed of habitual and exemplary goodness, he will bear his trials with fortitude and submission. What can exceed the simplicity and calmness with which the Apostle recounts his sufferings. "Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in cold and nakedness." Under all these sufferings, he was not only patient, but cheerful and happy. And such in a measure will every minister be, whose heart is governed by divine grace. He will be prepared for trials, particularly the trials which result from the misconduct of those to whom he is called to minister in holy things, some of whom despise his instructions, and even regard him as an enemy because he tells them the truth. He cannot but notice their ingratitude and perverseness with anxiety and grief. But he will still love them and seek their welfare. He will cheerfully bear with their faults and their injuries, and think little of his own sufferings, for the sake of promoting the salvation of their souls. How often soever they requite his faithful labors with coldness and contempt, he will still persevere in his sacred work with unabating zeal.

Far otherwise will it be with a minister who is destitute of piety, or whose piety is wanting in activity and steadfastness. How soon will his temper be ruffled and his patience exhausted by the difficulties of his office. The evils to which he is subjected, from the prejudices or the divisions of his flock, which should excite his pious solicitude in their behalf, produce an abatement of his pastoral affection, and render his duties unpleasant and irksome. Forgetting the silent meekness and gentleness of Christ, he complains of the trouble which comes upon him from the misconduct of his people, yea, he complains of those very evils which his own negligence or indiscretion has occasioned; and sometimes

he heaps reproaches upon those who have been committed to his charge, when he ought to mourn before God for the obstacles which his own unfaithfulness has thrown in the way of their salvation. He becomes at length so far alienated from them, that he would gladly cast off the obligations which bind him to their service.

LECTURE CXXVIII.

NECESSITY OF PERSONAL RELIGION.

CONSIDER in the next place how necessary it is that a minister should be devotedly pious in order to his *usefulness*. I would not deny that a minister may in various ways be useful, though influenced merely by natural principles. My position is, that real and active piety is indispensable to that kind and degree of usefulness, which is *appropriate to the ministerial office*.

The *example* of an ungodly minister will, in point of salutary influence, fall very far below that of one possessed of distinguished piety. It is in this important respect, that a minister who has little or no religion, will be likely sooner or later to show his woful deficiency.

Again. No one who duly considers the well known principles of God's moral government, can suppose that he will crown the labors of an unsanctified minister with as much success, as the labors of one who is sincerely pious and faithful. Whatever his natural or literary qualifications may be, he has no title to the divine blessing, and no reason to expect that God will hear his prayers.

"Verily," says one of the best of ministers,*—"verily it is the common danger and calamity of the church to have unregenerate pastors. Many become preachers, before they are Christians; are sanctified by dedication to the altar as God's priests, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication to Christ as his disciples.

* Richard Baxter.

Thus they worship an unknown God, preach an unknown Saviour, an unknown Spirit, an unknown state of holiness, and a future glory that is unknown, and to be unknown to them forever. And can it be expected, that such persons will prove any great blessings to the church? How can it be imagined that he is likely to be successful, who dealeth not heartily and faithfully in his work; who never soundly believes what he says, nor is ever truly serious, when he seems most diligent? And can you think that any unsanctified man can be hearty and serious in the ministerial work? A kind of seriousness indeed he may have. But the seriousness and fidelity of a sound believer, who ultimately intends the honor of God and the salvation of men, he cannot have. Oh, Sirs, all your preaching will be but dreaming and trifling hypocrisy, till the work be thoroughly done upon yourselves! How can you constantly apply yourselves to a work to which your carnal hearts are averse? How can you, with hearty favor, call upon sinners to repent and come to God, who never did either yourselves? How can you follow them with importunate solicitations to forsake sin and betake themselves to an holy life, who never felt the evil of the one, or the worth of the other? And let me tell you, that these things are never *well known*, till they are *felt;* and that he who feeleth them not himself, is not likely to speak feelingly of them to others. He that does not so strongly believe the word of God and the life to come, as to take off his own heart from the vanities of this world, and to bring him with resolution and diligence, to seek his own salvation, cannot be expected to be faithful in seeking the salvation of other men. He that dares to destroy *himself*, will dare to let others alone in the way to destruction. Alas, many preachers of the gospel are enemies to the gospel which they preach. Oh, how many such traitors have been in the church of Christ, who have done more against him under *his* colors, than they could have done in the open field!"

"Your people," the same author says, "are likely to feel it, when you have been much with God. I must say from lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my own soul. When I let my *heart* grow cold, my *preaching* is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused also. And I have often observed it in the best of my hearers, that when I have grown cold in preaching, they have grown cold accordingly. You cannot decline and neglect your duty, but *others* will be losers by it. If we let our love decrease, — it will appear in our doctrine. If the *matter* show it not, the *manner* will; and our hearers are likely to fare the worse for it. Whereas, if we could abound in faith, and love, and zeal; how would they overflow to the refreshing of our congregations! Watch therefore over your own hearts. If it be not your daily, serious business to study your own hearts, to subdue your corruptions and to walk with God, all will go amiss with you, and you will starve your audience."

The pernicious influence of a minister destitute of godliness, can hardly be described. In the minds of many, his character, and the religion he professes to teach, will be identified. In proportion as he falls below the proper standard of ministerial sanctity, their views of Christianity will be erroneous. He is set

up to give light. But if the light which he gives is darkness, how great is that darkness. Hence the unthinking multitude will lose sight of the distinction between right and wrong. For what regard will they feel for a distinction which is disregarded by him who is placed before them as a spiritual guide! Whence is it that so many persons in a Christian land form low and incorrect opinions of the nature of religion? It is because they turn away from the word of God, which holds up a standard of true but unseen excellence, and fix their eyes upon the character of a minister who is near them, and with whom they have a familiar acquaintance. It is gratifying to their depraved hearts to look at such a character, because it administers so little reproof. They may occasionally open the Scriptures and read, that Jesus was holy, harmless and undefiled, and that all men are required to love God with all the heart, and to be holy as he is holy. But they pass by these teachings of Scripture and banish any convictions of sin or fears of divine wrath which may disturb their peace, by referring to one who is consecrated to the service of God, and is employed in teaching the doctrines and duties of religion, in whom they can discover nothing of the excellence of Christ, and nothing of the benevolence and sanctity inculcated by his gospel; and in despite of the authority of revelation, they will judge of truth and duty from what they see in such a minister; and this way of judging confirms them in error, and gives countenance to the indulgence of their passions.

But you may say, an ungodly minister sometimes preaches the truth. Undoubtedly he does so. And the consequence is, that the doctrines of the gospel, as well as the sacredness of his office, are associated with the unrighteousness of his character. In this view, how great a pestilence is a minister whose character is stained with vice. Neither the sophistry of infidels, nor the ridicule of the profane, nor the persecution of the powerful has ever injured the cause of Christ so much as the impiety and profligacy of some of his professed ministers.

What a striking contrast to all this is found in the usefulness of a minister, whose exemplary piety shows the excellence of

religion, awakens the consciences of the wicked, and excites believers to press towards the mark.

Finally, a life of piety is necessary to a minister's *enjoyment*. The enjoyment of a faithful, devoted minister arises in part from the performance of his duties. The study of the Scriptures, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, and being perpetually conversant with spiritual and heavenly objects, yields him inexpressible delight. Even in his sufferings he has such a supporting sense of the divine presence, that he can say, "I am filled with comfort; I am exceedingly joyful in all my tribulations." The apostles speak of *rejoicing always*, — of triumphing and glorying in their afflictions. The lonely deserts through which they travelled, and the dungeons in which they were confined, witnessed their joy and their songs of praise.

It contributes much to the enjoyment of a minister who is sincerely pious, to witness the success of his labors. If it please the God of all grace, to look upon those to whom he ministers, and to quicken them by the Holy Spirit, what joy is like his? A tender parent feels unutterable joy over a dear child raised from dangerous sickness, or snatched from devouring flames. But still purer is the joy of an affectionate minister, when he sees his people washed from their sins, and delivered from the wrath to come! Even if he prevails to win only a few souls to Christ; with what holy delight does he stand and gaze upon those few redeemed souls, lately enemies to God by wicked works, now bearing fruit to his praise! What then must be his emotions, when the Holy Spirit is poured out, and multitudes of converts are added to the church! He participates the joy of the angels in heaven. Like the blessed Jesus, he rejoices in spirit, and thanks the Lord of heaven and earth for his distinguishing mercy. *He* enjoys the bliss of every converted sinner; and is himself enriched with the riches of divine grace displayed among his people. And if he may but see, believers fervent in spirit, growing in grace, and shining as lights in the world, — Oh, what pure, holy delight does he feel!

Even if he should at present be without visible success, he still has resources, which cannot fail. He resolves to do his duty in

obedience to the divine commands, quietly leaving the result of his labors to the disposal of infinite wisdom, and resting on the truth, that *God will be glorified.* He knows that if he is faithful, he will "be unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." He has moreover the joy of anticipating the glorious triumph of the cause in which he is enlisted. In the darkest seasons, he is supported by Christian hope, and by his endeavors to do good. For the rest, he patiently waits, till the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give him the unfading crown.

Besides all this, he enjoys the success of the gospel in the hands of other ministers, and the prosperity of Zion in other places. And when he reads the book of prophecy, which reveals the future enlargement and glory of the church, he is raised above his troubles, and filled with transport.

But what are all these things to a minister destitute of religion, and under the influence of an earthly mind? Can he be happy in the service of a master, whom he does not love? — happy, while occupied with business not congenial to the temper of his heart? Can he, who has never tasted the goodness of God in his own salvation, enjoy it in the salvation of others? Assign to him the most sacred labors. Let him be daily conversant with holy, heavenly objects. These are all adverse to his feelings. Present to him the glory of the only begotten of the Father, and the beauty of grace in the redeemed; but this is a beauty and glory which he has no eyes to see, and no heart to love. Assure him that the set time to favor Zion will come; that she will be for a name and a praise in all the earth. His heart is unmoved. He sees only barren, cheerless deserts, in those fields and gardens "which the Lord hath blessed."

And if religion is so indispensable to the proper enjoyments of a minister in this world; how much more to prepare him for its rewards in the world to come. No one who has not been renewed by the Spirit, and labored faithfully to bring sinners to repentance, can meet the approbation of the final Judge. Even if an ungodly minister should be admitted into the celestial paradise, he

would have no relish for its pleasures. The same impiety, which disqualifies him for the enjoyments of the ministry here, would disqualify him for its holy rewards hereafter. As he has in the present life no heart to rejoice in the good of Zion, so, at the last day, when he looks upon the innumerable multitude who have been ransomed from sin and made perfect in holiness, and beholds the exalted majesty and glory of the kingdom of Christ; it will be no joy to him. He will turn away from the sight, envying the happiness which he cannot taste.

The truth which I have thus aimed to establish is a truth of the highest moment to all who expect to be invested with the sacred office. If destitute of holiness, whatever may be their attainments and qualifications in other respects, they are unfit for the ministry, and with all their gifts, are really as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. They do not answer the description, which the Spirit of God has given of his ministers. *They can do nothing to purpose in advancing the kingdom of Christ. They cannot accomplish the great end of the Christian ministry. They cannot rightly perform its duties.* They cannot rightly encounter its trials and difficulties. They will fall short of the proper usefulness of the sacred office; and will be incapable of enjoying its appropriate pleasures.

Out of regard then to their own interest, as well as to the interest of the church, it becomes candidates for the ministry to pause on the threshold of the sacred office, and examine themselves as to their fitness for its duties, lest they should incur the guilt of touching the ark of God with unhallowed hands.

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